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# SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

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TORONTO

# SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE

LYRICS AND REVERIES

WITH MISCELLANEOUS PIECES

BY

THOMAS HARDY

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

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# LYRICS AND REVERIES



## IN FRONT OF THE LANDSCAPE

PLUNGING and labouring on in a tide of  
visions,  
Dolorous and dear,  
Forward I pushed my way as amid waste  
waters  
Stretching around,  
Through whose eddies there glimmered the  
customed landscape  
Yonder and near,

Blotted to feeble mist. And the coomb and  
the upland  
Foliage-crowned,  
Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the  
grass-flat  
Stroked by the light,  
Seemed but a ghost-like gauze, and no  
substantial  
Meadow or mound.

What were the infinite spectacles bulking  
foremost  
Under my sight,

#### 4 IN FRONT OF THE LANDSCAPE

Hindering me to discern my paced advance-  
ment

Lengthening to miles ;

What were the re-creations killing the daytime  
As by the night ?

O they were speechful faces, gazing insistent,  
Some as with smiles,

Some as with slow-born tears that brinily  
trundled

Over the wrecked

Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, ash  
now with anguish,  
Harrowed by wiles.

Yes, I could see them, feel them, hear them,  
address them—

Halo-bedecked—

And, alas, onwards, shaken by fierce unreason,  
Rigid in hate,

Smitten by years-long wryness born of  
misprision,  
Dreaded, suspect.

Then there would breast me shining sights,  
sweet seasons

Further in date ;

Instruments of strings with the tenderest  
passion

Vibrant, beside

## IN FRONT OF THE LANDSCAPE 5

Lamps long extinguished, robes, cheeks, eyes  
with the earth's crust  
Now corporate.

Also there rose a headland of hoary aspect  
Gnawed by the tide,  
Frilled by the nimb of the morning as two  
friends stood there  
Guilelessly glad—  
Wherefore they knew not—touched by the  
fringe of an ecstasy  
Scantly descried.

Later images too did the day unfurl me,  
Shadowed and sad,  
Clay cadavers of those who had shared in  
the dramas,  
Laid now at ease,  
Passions all spent, chiefest the one of the  
broad brow  
Sepulture-clad.

So did beset me scenes miscalled of the  
bygone,  
Over the leaze,  
Past the clump, and down to where lay the  
beheld ones ;  
—Yea, as the rhyme  
Sung by the sea-swell, so in their pleading  
dumbness  
Captured me these.

## 6 IN FRONT OF THE LANDSCAPE

For, their lost revisiting manifestations  
    In their own time  
Much had I slighted, caring not for their  
    purport,  
    Seeing behind  
Things more coveted, reckoned the better  
    worth calling  
    Sweet, sad, sublime.

Thus do they now show hourly before the  
    intenser  
    Stare of the mind  
As they were ghosts avenging their slights  
    by my bypast  
    Body-borne eyes,  
Show, too, with fuller translation than rested  
    upon them  
    As living kind.

Hence wag the tongues of the passing people,  
    saying  
    In their surmise,  
“Ah—whose is this dull form that peram-  
    bulates, seeing nought  
    Round him that looms  
Whithersoever his footsteps turn in his  
    farings,  
    Save a few tombs?”

## CHANNEL FIRING

THAT night your great guns, unawares,  
Shook all our coffins as we lay,  
And broke the chancel window-squares,  
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome  
Arose the howl of wakened hounds :  
The mouse let fall the altar-crumbs,  
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called,  
"No ;  
It's gunnery practice out at sea  
Just as before you went below ;  
The world is as it used to be :

"All nations striving strong to make  
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters  
They do no more for Christ's sake  
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

“That this is not the judgment-hour  
For some of them’s a blessed thing,  
For if it were they’d have to scour  
Hell’s floor for so much threatening. . . .

“Ha, ha. It will be warmer when  
I blow the trumpet (if indeed  
I ever do ; for you are men,  
And rest eternal sorely need).”

So down we lay again. “I wonder,  
Will the world ever saner be,”  
Said one, “than when He sent us under  
In our indifferent century !”

And many a skeleton shook his head.  
“Instead of preaching forty year,”  
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,  
“I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer.”

Again the guns disturbed the hour,  
Roaring their readiness to avenge,  
As far inland as Stourton Tower,  
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

*April 1914.*

# THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWIN

*(Lines on the loss of the "Titanic")*

## I

IN a solitude of the sea  
Deep from human vanity,  
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly  
couches she.

## II

Steel chambers, late the pyres  
Of her salamandrine fires,  
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic  
tidal lyres.

## III

Over the mirrors meant  
To glass the opulent  
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed,  
dumb, indifferent.

## 10 CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

### IV

Jewels in joy designed  
To ravish the sensuous mind  
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and  
black and blind.

### V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near  
Gaze at the gilded gear  
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness  
down here?" . . .

### VI

Well : while was fashioning  
This creature of cleaving wing,  
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges  
everything

### VII

Prepared a sinister mate  
For her—so gaily great—  
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

### VIII

And as the smart ship grew  
In stature, grace, and hue,  
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg  
too.

## CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN 11

### IX

Alien they seemed to be :  
No mortal eye could see  
The intimate welding of their later history,

### X

Or sign that they were bent  
By paths coincident  
On being anon twin halves of one august  
event,

### XI

Till the Spinner of the Years  
Said "Now!" And each one hears,  
And consummation comes, and jars two  
hemispheres.

## THE GHOST OF THE PAST

WE two kept house, the Past and I,  
    The Past and I ;  
I tended while it hovered nigh,  
    Leaving me never alone.  
It was a spectral housekeeping  
    Where fell no jarring tone,  
As strange, as still a housekeeping  
    As ever has been known.

As daily I went up the stair  
    And down the stair,  
I did not mind the Bygone there—  
    The Present once to me ;  
Its moving meek companionship  
    I wished might ever be,  
There was in that companionship  
    Something of ecstasy.

It dwelt with me just as it was,  
    Just as it was  
When first its prospects gave me pause  
    In wayward wanderings,

## THE GHOST OF THE PAST 13

Before the years had torn old troths  
    As they tear all sweet things,  
Before gaunt griefs had torn old troths  
    And dulled old rapturings.

And then its form began to fade,  
    Began to fade,  
Its gentle echoes faintlier played  
    At eves upon my ear  
Than when the autumn's look embrowned  
    The lonely chambers here,  
The autumn's settling shades embrowned  
    Nooks that it haunted near.

And so with time my vision less,  
    Yea, less and less  
Makes of that Past my housemistress,  
    It dwindles in my eye ;  
It looms a far-off skeleton  
    And not a comrade nigh,  
A fitful far-off skeleton  
    Dimming as days draw by.

## AFTER THE VISIT

(*To F. E. D.*)

COME again to the place  
Where your presence was as a leaf that skims  
Down a drouthy way whose ascent bedims  
The bloom on the farer's face.

Come again, with the feet  
That were light on the green as a thistledown  
ball,  
And those mute ministrations to one and  
to all  
Beyond a man's saying sweet.

Until then the faint scent  
Of the bordering flowers swam unheeded  
away,  
And I marked not the charm in the changes  
of day  
As the cloud-colours came and went.

Through the dark corridors  
Your walk was so soundless I did not know  
Your form from a phantom's of long ago  
Said to pass on the ancient floors,

Till you drew from the shade,  
And I saw the large luminous living eyes  
Regard me in fixed inquiring-wise  
As those of a soul that weighed,

Scarce consciously,  
The eternal question of what Life was,  
And why we were there, and by whose  
strange laws  
That which mattered most could not  
be.

## TO MEET, OR OTHERWISE

WHETHER to sally and see thee, girl of my  
dreams,  
Or whether to stay  
And see thee not ! How vast the differ-  
ence seems  
Of Yea from Nay  
Just now. Yet this same sun will slant  
its beams  
At no far day  
On our two mounds, and then what will the  
difference weigh !

Yet I will see thee, maiden dear, and make  
The most I can  
Of what remains to us amid this brake  
Cimmerian  
Through which we grope, and from whose  
thorns we ache,  
While still we scan  
Round our frail faltering progress for some  
path or plan.

TO MEET, OR OTHERWISE 17

By briefest meeting something sure is  
    won ;  
    It will have been :  
Nor God nor Daemon can undo the done,  
    Unsight the seen,  
Make muted music be as unbegun,  
    Though things terrene  
Groan in their bondage till oblivion supervene.

So, to the one long-sweeping symphony  
    From times remote  
Till now, of human tenderness, shall we  
    Supply one note,  
Small and untraced, yet that will ever be  
    Somewhere afloat  
Amid the spheres, as part of sick Life's  
    antidote.

## THE DIFFERENCE

### I

SINKING down by the gate I discern the thin  
    moon,  
And a blackbird tries over old airs in the  
    pine,  
But the moon is a sorry one, sad the bird's  
    tune,  
For this spot is unknown to that Heartmate  
    of mine.

### II

Did my Heartmate but haunt here at times  
    such as now,  
The song would be joyous and cheerful the  
    moon ;  
But she will see never this gate, path, or  
    bough,  
Nor I find a joy in the scene or the tune.

## THE SUN ON THE BOOKCASE

(*Student's Love-song*)

ONCE more the cauldron of the sun  
Smears the bookcase with winy red,  
And here my page is, and there my bed,  
And the apple-tree shadows travel along.  
Soon their intangible track will be run,  
    And dusk grow strong  
    And they be fled.

Yes : now the boiling ball is gone,  
And I have wasted another day. . . .  
But wasted—*wasted*, do I say ?  
Is it a waste to have imaged one  
Beyond the hills there, who, anon,  
    My great deeds done  
    Will be mine always ?

“WHEN I SET OUT FOR  
LYONNESSE”

WHEN I set out for Lyonesse,  
A hundred miles away,  
The rime was on the spray,  
And starlight lit my lonesomeness  
When I set out for Lyonesse  
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there  
No prophet durst declare,  
Nor did the wisest wizard guess  
What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes,  
None managed to surmise  
What meant my godlike gloriousness,  
When I came back from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes.

## A THUNDERSTORM IN TOWN

(*A Reminiscence*)

SHE wore a new "terra-cotta" dress,  
And we stayed, because of the pelting storm,  
Within the hansom's dry recess,  
Though the horse had stopped; yea, motion-  
less

We sat on, snug and warm.

Then the downpour ceased, to my sharp sad  
pain,  
And the glass that had screened our forms  
before

Flew up, and out she sprang to her door :  
I should have kissed her if the rain

Had lasted a minute more.

## THE TORN LETTER

### I

I TORE your letter into strips  
    No bigger than the airy feathers  
    That ducks preen out in changing  
        weathers  
Upon the shifting ripple-tips.

### II

In darkness on my bed alone  
    I seemed to see you in a vision,  
    And hear you say : " Why this derision  
Of one drawn to you, though unknown ? "

### III

Yes, eve's quick mood had run its course,  
    The night had cooled my hasty madness;  
    I suffered a regretful sadness  
Which deepened into real remorse.

## IV

I thought what pensive patient days  
    A soul must know of grain so tender,  
    How much of good must grace the  
        sender  
Of such sweet words in such bright phrase.

## V

Uprising then, as things unpriced  
    I sought each fragment, patched and  
        mended ;  
    The midnight whitened ere I had ended  
And gathered words I had sacrificed.

## VI

But some, alas, of those I threw  
    Were past my search, destroyed for ever :  
    They were your name and place ; and  
        never  
Did I regain those clues to you.

## VII

I learnt I had missed, by rash unheed,  
    My track ; that, so the Will decided,  
    In life, death, we should be divided,  
And at the sense I ached indeed.

## VIII

That ache for you, born long ago,  
    Throbs on ; I never could outgrow it.  
    What a revenge, did you but know it !  
But that, thank God, you do not know.

## BEYOND THE LAST LAMP

*(Near Tooting Common)*

### I

WHILE rain, with eve in partnership,  
Descended darkly, drip, drip, drip,  
Beyond the last lone lamp I passed  
    Walking slowly, whispering sadly,  
    Two linked loiterers, wan, downcast :  
Some heavy thought constrained each face,  
And blinded them to time and place.

### II

The pair seemed lovers, yet absorbed  
In mental scenes no longer orb'd  
By love's young rays. Each countenance  
    As it slowly, as it sadly  
    Caught the lamplight's yellow glance  
Held in suspense a misery  
At things which had been or might be.

## 26 BEYOND THE LAST LAMP

### III

When I retrod that watery way  
Some hours beyond the droop of day,  
Still I found pacing there the twain  
    Just as slowly, just as sadly,  
    Heedless of the night and rain.  
One could but wonder who they were  
And what wild woe detained them there.

### IV

Though thirty years of blur and blot  
Have slid since I beheld that spot,  
And saw in curious converse there  
    Moving slowly, moving sadly  
    That mysterious tragic pair,  
Its olden look may linger on—  
All but the couple ; they have gone.

### V

Whither? Who knows, indeed. . . . And yet  
To me, when nights are weird and wet,  
Without those comrades there at tryst  
    Creeping slowly, creeping sadly,  
    That lone lane does not exist.  
There they seem brooding on their pain,  
And will, while such a lane remain.

## THE FACE AT THE CASEMENT

If ever joy leave  
An abiding sting of sorrow,  
So befell it on the morrow  
Of that May eve. . . .

The travelled sun dropped  
To the north-west, low and lower,  
The pony's trot grew slower,  
And then we stopped.

"This cosy house just by  
I must call at for a minute,  
A sick man lies within it  
Who soon will die.

"He wished to marry me,  
So I am bound, when I drive near him,  
To inquire, if but to cheer him,  
How he may be."

## 28 THE FACE AT THE CASEMENT

A message was sent in,  
And wordlessly we waited,  
Till some one came and stated  
The bulletin.

And that the sufferer said,  
For her call no words could thank her ;  
As his angel he must rank her  
Till life's spark fled.

Slowly we drove away,  
When I turned my head, although not  
Called ; why so I turned I know not  
Even to this day.

And lo, there in my view  
Pressed against an upper lattice  
Was a white face, gazing at us  
As we withdrew.

And well did I divine  
It to be the man's there dying,  
Who but lately had been sighing  
For her pledged mine.

Then I deigned a deed of hell ;  
It was done before I knew it ;  
What devil made me do it  
I cannot tell !

## THE FACE AT THE CASEMENT 29

Yes, while he gazed above,  
I put my arm about her  
That he might see, nor doubt her  
My plighted Love.

The pale face vanished quick,  
As if blasted, from the casement,  
And my shame and self-abasement  
Began their prick.

And they prick on, ceaselessly,  
For that stab in Love's fierce fashion  
Which, unfired by lover's passion,  
Was foreign to me.

She smiled at my caress,  
But why came the soft embowment  
Of her shoulder at that moment  
She did not guess.

Long long years has he lain  
In thy garth, O sad Saint Cleather :  
What tears there, bared to weather,  
Will cleanse that stain !

Love is long-suffering, brave,  
Sweet, prompt, precious as a jewel ;  
But O, too, Love is cruel,  
Cruel as the grave.

## LOST LOVE

I PLAY my sweet old airs—  
The airs he knew  
When our love was true—  
But he does not balk  
His determined walk,  
And passes up the stairs.

I sing my songs once more,  
And presently hear  
His footstep near  
As if it would stay ;  
But he goes his way,  
And shuts a distant door.

So I wait for another morn  
And another night  
In this soul-sick blight ;  
And I wonder much  
As I sit, why such  
A woman as I was born !

“MY SPIRIT WILL NOT HAUNT  
THE MOUND”

My spirit will not haunt the mound  
    Above my breast,  
But travel, memory-possessed,  
To where my tremulous being found  
    Life largest, best.

My phantom-footed shape will go  
    When nightfall grays  
Hither and thither along the ways  
I and another used to know  
    In backward days.

And there you'll find me, if a jot  
    You still should care  
For me, and for my curious air ;  
If otherwise, then I shall not,  
    For you, be there.

## WESSEX HEIGHTS

(1896)

THERE are some heights in Wessex, shaped  
as if by a kindly hand  
For thinking, dreaming, dying on, and at  
crises when I stand,  
Say, on Ingpen Beacon eastward, or on  
Wylls-Neck westwardly,  
I seem where I was before my birth, and  
after death may be.

In the lowlands I have no comrade, not even  
the lone man's friend—  
Her who suffereth long and is kind ; accepts  
what he is too weak to mend :  
Down there they are dubious and askance ;  
there nobody thinks as I,  
But mind-chains do not clank where one's  
next neighbour is the sky.

In the towns I am tracked by phantoms  
having weird detective ways—  
Shadows of beings who fellowed with myself  
of earlier days :

They hang about at places, and they say  
harsh heavy things—  
Men with a frigid sneer, and women with  
tart disparagings.

Down there I seem to be false to myself, my  
simple self that was,  
And is not now, and I see him watching,  
wondering what crass cause  
Can have merged him into such a strange  
continuator as this,  
Who yet has something in common with  
himself, my chrysalis.

I cannot go to the great grey Plain ; there's  
a figure against the moon,  
Nobody sees it but I, and it makes my breast  
beat out of tune ;  
I cannot go to the tall-spired town, being  
barred by the forms now passed  
For everybody but me, in whose long vision  
they stand there fast.

There's a ghost at Yell'ham Bottom chiding  
loud at the fall of the night,  
There's a ghost in Froom-side Vale, thin  
lipped and vague, in a shroud of white,  
There is one in the railway-train whenever I  
do not want it near,  
I see its profile against the pane, saying what  
I would not hear.

As for one rare fair woman, I am now but a  
thought of hers,  
I enter her mind and another thought succeeds  
me that she prefers ;  
Yet my love for her in its fulness she herself  
even did not know ;  
Well, time cures hearts of tenderness, and  
now I can let her go.

So I am found on Ingpen Beacon, or on  
Wylls-Neck to the west,  
Or else on homely Bulbarrow, or little Pilsdon  
Crest,  
Where men have never cared to haunt, nor  
women have walked with me,  
And ghosts then keep their distance ; and I  
know some liberty.

## IN DEATH DIVIDED

### I

I SHALL rot here, with those whom in their  
day  
You never knew,  
And alien ones who, ere they chilled to clay,  
Met not my view,  
Will in your distant grave-place ever neigh-  
bour you.

### II

No shade of pinnacle or tree or tower,  
While earth endures,  
Will fall on my mound and within the hour  
Steal on to yours ;  
One robin never haunt our two green  
covertures.

### III

Some organ may resound on Sunday noons  
By where you lie,  
Some other thrill the panes with other tunes  
Where moulder I ;  
No selfsame chords compose our common  
lullaby.

## IV

The simply-cut memorial at my head  
Perhaps may take  
A Gothic form, and that above your bed  
Be Greek in make ;  
No linking symbol show thereon for our tale's  
sake.

## V

And in the monotonous moils of strained,  
hard-run  
Humanity,  
The eternal tie which binds us twain in one  
No eye will see  
Stretching across the miles that sever you  
from me.

## THE PLACE ON THE MAP

### I

I LOOK upon the map that hangs by me—  
Its shires and towns and rivers lined in  
varnished artistry—  
And I mark a jutting height  
Coloured purple, with a margin of blue sea.

### II

—'Twas a day of latter summer, hot and  
dry ;  
Ay, even the waves seemed drying as we  
walked on, she and I,  
By this spot where, calmly quite,  
She informed me what would happen by  
and by.

### III

This hanging map depicts the coast and  
place,  
And resuscitates therewith our unexpected  
troublous case  
All distinctly to my sight,  
And her tension, and the aspect of her face.

## 38 THE PLACE ON THE MAP

### IV

Weeks and weeks we had loved beneath  
that blazing blue,  
Which had lost the art of raining, as her eyes  
to-day had too,  
While she told what, as by sleight,  
Shot our firmament with rays of ruddy hue.

### V

For the wonder and the wormwood of the  
whole  
Was that what in realms of reason would have  
joyed our double soul  
Wore a torrid tragic light  
Under order-keeping's rigorous control.

### VI

So, the map revives her words, the spot,  
the time,  
And the thing we found we had to face before  
the next year's prime ;  
The charted coast stares bright,  
And its episode comes back in pantomime.

## WHERE THE PICNIC WAS

WHERE we made the fire,  
In the summer time,  
Of branch and briar  
On the hill to the sea  
I slowly climb  
Through winter mire,  
And scan and trace  
The forsaken place  
Quite readily.

Now a cold wind blows,  
And the grass is gray,  
But the spot still shows  
As a burnt circle—aye,  
And stick-ends, charred,  
Still strew the sward  
Whereon I stand,  
Last relic of the band  
Who came that day !

40    WHERE THE PICNIC WAS

Yes, I am here  
Just as last year,  
And the sea breathes brine  
From its strange straight line  
Up hither, the same  
As when we four came.  
—But two have wandered far  
From this grassy rise  
Into urban roar  
Where no picnics are,  
And one—has shut her eyes  
For evermore.

## THE SCHRECKHORN

*(With thoughts of Leslie Stephen)*

(June 1897)

ALOOOF, as if a thing of mood and whim ;  
Now that its spare and desolate figure gleams  
Upon my nearing vision, less it seems  
A looming Alp-height than a guise of him  
Who scaled its horn with ventured life and  
limb,  
Drawn on by vague imaginings, maybe,  
Of semblance to his personality  
In its quaint glooms, keen lights, and rugged  
trim.

At his last change, when Life's dull coils  
unwind,  
Will he, in old love, hitherward escape,  
And the eternal essence of his mind  
Enter this silent adamantine shape,  
And his low voicing haunt its slipping snows  
When dawn that calls the climber dyes them  
rose ?

## A SINGER ASLEEP

(*Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 1837-1909)

### I

IN this fair niche above the unslumbering sea,  
That sentrys up and down all night, all day,  
From cove to promontory, from ness to bay,  
The Fates have fitly bidden that he should be  
Pillowed eternally.

### II

—It was as though a garland of red roses  
Had fallen about the hood of some smug nun  
When irresponsibly dropped as from the sun,  
In fulth of numbers freaked with musical  
closes,  
Upon Victoria's formal middle time  
His leaves of rhythm and rhyme.

### III

O that far morning of a summer day  
When, down a terraced street whose pave-  
ments lay

Glassing the sunshine into my bent eyes,  
I walked and read with a quick glad surprise  
New words, in classic guise,—

## IV

The passionate pages of his earlier years,  
Fraught with hot sighs, sad laughter, kisses,  
tears ;  
Fresh-fluted notes, yet from a minstrel who  
Blew them not naively, but as one who knew  
Full well why thus he blew.

## V

I still can hear the brabble and the roar  
At those thy tunes, O still one, now passed  
through  
That fitful fire of tongues then entered new !  
Their power is spent like spindrift on this  
shore ;  
Thine swells yet more and more.

## VI

—His singing-mistress verily was no other  
Than she the Lesbian, she the music-mother  
Of all the tribe that feel in melodies ;  
Who leapt, love-anguished, from the Leu-  
cadian steep  
Into the rambling world-encircling deep  
Which hides her where none sees.

## VII

And one can hold in thought that nightly  
here  
His phantom may draw down to the water's  
brim,  
And hers come up to meet it, as a dim  
Lone shine upon the heaving hydrosphere,  
And mariners wonder as they traverse near,  
Unknowing of her and him.

## VIII

One dreams him sighing to her spectral form :  
"O teacher, where lies hid thy burning line ;  
Where are those songs, O poetess divine  
Whose very arts are love incarnadine?"  
And her smile back : "Disciple true and  
warm,  
Sufficient now are thine." . . .

## IX

So here, beneath the waking constellations,  
Where the waves peal their everlasting strains,  
And their dull subterrene reverberations  
Shake him when storms make mountains of  
their plains—  
Him once their peer in sad improvisations,  
And deft as wind to cleave their frothy  
manes—  
I leave him, while the daylight gleam declines  
Upon the capes and chines.

## A PLAINT TO MAN

WHEN you slowly emerged from the den of  
Time,  
And gained percipience as you grew,  
And fleshed you fair out of shapeless slime,

Wherefore, O Man, did there come to you  
The unhappy need of creating me—  
A form like your own—for praying to ?

My virtue, power, utility,  
Within my maker must all abide,  
Since none in myself can ever be,

One thin as a shape on a lantern-slide  
Shown forth in the dark upon some dim sheet,  
And by none but its showman vivified.

“Such a forced device,” you may say, “is  
meet  
For easing a loaded heart at whiles :  
Man needs to conceive of a mercy-seat

Somewhere above the gloomy aisles  
Of this wailful world, or he could not bear  
The irk no local hope beguiles."

—But since I was framed in your first despair  
The doing without me has had no play  
In the minds of men when shadows scare ;

And now that I dwindle day by day  
Beneath the decide eyes of seers  
In a light that will not let me stay,

And to-morrow the whole of me disappears,  
The truth should be told, and the fact be faced  
That had best been faced in earlier years :

The fact of life with dependence placed  
On the human heart's resource alone,  
In brotherhood bonded close and graced

With loving-kindness fully blown,  
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

## GOD'S FUNERAL

### I

I SAW a slowly-stepping train—  
Lined on the brows, scoop-eyed and bent  
and hoar—  
Following in files across a twilit plain  
A strange and mystic form the foremost bore.

### II

And by contagious throbs of thought  
Or latent knowledge that within me lay  
And had already stirred me, I was wrought  
To consciousness of sorrow even as they.

### III

The fore-borne shape, to my blurred eyes,  
At first seemed man-like, and anon to change  
To an amorphous cloud of marvellous size,  
At times endowed with wings of glorious  
range.

## IV

And this phantasmal variousness  
Ever possessed it as they drew along :  
Yet throughout all it symbolled none the less  
Potency vast and loving-kindness strong.

## V

Almost before I knew I bent  
Towards the moving columns without a word ;  
They, growing in bulk and numbers as they  
went,  
Struck out sick thoughts that could be over-  
heard :—

## VI

“ O man-projected Figure, of late  
Imaged as we, thy knell who shall survive ?  
Whence came it we were tempted to create  
One whom we can no longer keep alive ?

## VII

“ Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,  
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,  
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,  
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold.

## VIII

“ And, tricked by our own early dream  
And need of solace, we grew self-deceived,  
Our making soon our maker did we deem,  
And what we had imagined we believed.

## IX

“ Till, in Time's stayless stealthy swing,  
Uncompromising rude reality  
Mangled the Monarch of our fashioning,  
Who quavered, sank ; and now has ceased  
to be.

## X

“ So, toward our myth's oblivion,  
Darkling, and languid-lipped, we creep and  
grope  
Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon,  
Whose Zion was a still abiding hope.

## XI

“ How sweet it was in years far hied  
To start the wheels of day with trustful  
prayer,  
To lie down liegely at the eventide  
And feel a blest assurance he was there !

## XII

“And who or what shall fill his place ?  
Whither will wanderers turn distracted eyes  
For some fixed star to stimulate their pace  
Towards the goal of their enterprise ?” . . .

## XIII

Some in the background then I saw,  
Sweet women, youths, men, all incredulous,  
Who chimed as one : “ This figure is of straw,  
This requiem mockery ! Still he lives to us ! ”

## XIV

I could not prop their faith : and yet  
Many I had known : with all I sympathized ;  
And though struck speechless, I did not forget  
That what was mourned for, I, too, once had  
prized.

## XV

Still, how to bear such loss I deemed  
The insistent question for each animate mind,  
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed  
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind,

## XVI

Whereof, to lift the general night,  
A certain few who stood aloof had said,  
"See you upon the horizon that small light—  
Swelling somewhat?" Each mourner shook  
his head.

## XVII

And they composed a crowd of whom  
Some were right good, and many nigh the  
best. . . .  
Thus dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and  
gloom  
Mechanically I followed with the rest.

## SPECTRES THAT GRIEVE

"It is not death that harrows us," they  
lipped,  
"The soundless cell is in itself relief,  
For life is an unfenced flower, benumbed and  
nipped  
At unawares, and at its best but brief."

The speakers, sundry phantoms of the gone,  
Had risen like filmy flames of phosphor dye,  
As if the palest of sheet lightnings shone  
From the sward near me, as from a nether  
sky.

And much surprised was I that, spent and  
dead,  
They should not, like the many, be at rest,  
But stray as apparitions ; hence I said,  
"Why, having slipped life, hark you back  
distressed?"

"We are among the few death sets not free,  
The hurt, misrepresented names, who come

At each year's brink, and cry to History  
To do them justice, or go past them dumb.

"We are stript of rights ; our shames lie  
    unredressed,  
Our deeds in full anatomy are not shown,  
Our words in morsels merely are expressed  
On the scripted page, our motives blurred,  
    unknown."

Then all these shaken slighted visitants  
    sped  
Into the vague, and left me musing there  
On fames that well might instance what they  
    had said,  
Until the New-Year's dawn strode up the air.

“AH, ARE YOU DIGGING ON  
MY GRAVE?”

“AH, are you digging on my grave  
My loved one?—planting rue?”

—“No : yesterday he went to wed  
One of the brightest wealth has bred.

‘It cannot hurt her now,’ he said,  
‘That I should not be true.’”

“Then who is digging on my grave?  
My nearest dearest kin?”

—“Ah, no ; they sit and think, ‘What use !  
What good will planting flowers produce ?  
No tendance of her mound can loose  
Her spirit from Death’s gin.’”

“But some one digs upon my grave?  
My enemy?—prodding sly?”

—“Nay : when she heard you had passed  
the Gate

That shuts on all flesh soon or late,  
She thought you no more worth her hate,  
And cares not where you lie.”

“Then, who is digging on my grave?

Say—since I have not guessed!”

—“O it is I, my mistress dear,  
Your little dog, who still lives near,  
And much I hope my movements here  
Have not disturbed your rest?”

“Ah, yes! *You* dig upon my grave . . .

Why flashed it not on me  
That one true heart was left behind!  
What feeling do we ever find  
To equal among human kind  
A dog's fidelity!”

“Mistress, I dug upon your grave

To bury a bone, in case  
I should be hungry near this spot  
When passing on my daily trot.  
I am sorry, but I quite forgot  
It was your resting-place.”



SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE  
IN FIFTEEN GLIMPSES



I  
AT TEA

THE kettle descants in a cozy drone,  
And the young wife looks in her husband's  
face,  
And then at her guest's, and shows in her  
own  
Her sense that she fills an envied place ;  
And the visiting lady is all abloom,  
And says there was never so sweet a room.

And the happy young housewife does not  
know  
That the woman beside her was first his  
choice,  
Till the fates ordained it could not be so. . . .  
Betraying nothing in look or voice  
The guest sits smiling and sips her tea,  
And he throws her a stray glance yearningly.

## II

### IN CHURCH

“AND now to God the Father,” he ends,  
And his voice thrills up to the topmost tiles :  
Each listener chokes as he bows and bends,  
And emotion pervades the crowded aisles.  
Then the preacher glides to the vestry-door,  
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile,  
And a pupil of his in the Bible class,  
Who adores him as one without gloss or  
    guile,  
Sees her idol stand with a satisfied smile  
And re-enact at the vestry-glass  
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show  
That had moved the congregation so.

### III

#### BY HER AUNT'S GRAVE

"SIXPENCE a week," says the girl to her lover,  
"Aunt used to bring me, for she could  
confide

In me alone, she vowed. 'Twas to cover  
The cost of her headstone when she died.  
And that was a year ago last June ;  
I've not yet fixed it. But I must soon."

"And where is the money now, my dear?"  
"O, snug in my purse . . . Aunt was *so* slow  
In saving it—eighty weeks, or near." . . .  
"Let's spend it," he hints. "For she won't  
know.

There's a dance to-night at the Load of  
Hay."

She passively nods. And they go that way.

IV  
IN THE ROOM OF THE  
BRIDE-ELECT

WOULD it had been the man of our wish !”  
Sighs her mother. To whom with vehemence  
she

In the wedding-dress—the wife to be—

“Then why were you so mollyish

As not to insist on him for me !”

The mother, amazed : “Why, dearest one,  
Because you pleaded for this or none !”

“But Father and you should have stood out  
strong !

Since then, to my cost, I have lived to find

That you were right and that I was wrong ;

This man is a dolt to the one declined. . . .

Ah !—here he comes with his button-hole  
rose.

Good God—I must marry him I suppose !”

V

AT A WATERING-PLACE

THEY sit and smoke on the esplanade,  
The man and his friend, and regard the bay  
Where the far chalk cliffs, to the left  
    displayed,  
Smile sallowly in the decline of day.  
And saunterers pass with laugh and jest—  
A handsome couple among the rest.

“That smart proud pair,” says the man to  
    his friend,  
“Are to marry next week. . . . How little  
    he thinks  
That dozens of days and nights on end  
I have stroked her neck, unhooked the links  
Of her sleeve to get at her upper arm. . . .  
Well, bliss is in ignorance: what’s the harm!”

## VI

### IN THE CEMETERY

“ You see those mothers squabbling there ? ”  
Remarks the man of the cemetery.

“ One says in tears, ‘ *’Tis mine lies here !* ’

Another, ‘ *Nay, mine, you Pharisee !* ’

Another, ‘ *How dare you move my flowers  
And put your own on this grave of ours !* ’

But all their children were laid therein  
At different times, like sprats in a tin.

“ And then the main drain had to cross,  
And we moved the lot some nights ago,  
And packed them away in the general foss  
With hundreds more. But their folks don’t  
know,

And as well cry over a new-laid drain  
As anything else, to ease your pain ! ”

## VII

### OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

“MY stick!” he says, and turns in the lane  
To the house just left, whence a vixen voice  
Comes out with the firelight through the pane,  
And he sees within that the girl of his choice  
Stands rating her mother with eyes aglare  
For something said while he was there.

“At last I behold her soul undraped!”  
Thinks the man who had loved her more than  
himself;

“My God!—’tis but narrowly I have  
escaped.—

My precious porcelain proves it delf.”  
His face has reddened like one ashamed,  
And he steals off, leaving his stick unclaimed.

## VIII

### IN THE STUDY

HE enters, and mute on the edge of a chair  
Sits a thin-faced lady, a stranger there,  
A type of decayed gentility ;  
And by some small signs he well can guess  
That she comes to him almost breakfastless.

“ I have called—I hope I do not err—  
I am looking for a purchaser  
Of some score volumes of the works  
Of eminent divines I own,—  
Left by my father—though it irks  
My patience to offer them.” And she smiles  
As if necessity were unknown ;  
“ But the truth of it is that oftenwhiles  
I have wished, as I am fond of art,  
To make my rooms a little smart.”  
And lightly still she laughs to him,  
As if to sell were a mere gay whim,  
And that, to be frank, Life were indeed  
To her not vinegar and gall,  
But fresh and honey-like ; and Need  
No household skeleton at all.

## IX

### AT THE ALTAR-RAIL

“My bride is not coming, alas!” says the  
groom,  
And the telegram shakes in his hand. “I own  
It was hurried! We met at a dancing-room  
When I went to the Cattle-Show alone,  
And then, next night, where the Fountain  
leaps,  
And the Street of the Quarter-Circle sweeps.

“Ay, she won me to ask her to be my wife—  
'Twas foolish perhaps!—to forsake the ways  
Of the flaring town for a farmer's life.  
She agreed. And we fixed it. Now she says :  
*‘It's sweet of you, dear, to prepare me a nest,  
But a swift, short, gay life suits me best.  
What I really am you have never gleaned ;  
I had eaten the apple ere you were weaned.’*”

X

IN THE NUPTIAL CHAMBER

“O THAT mastering tune?” And up in the  
bed  
Like a lace-robed phantom springs the bride ;  
“And why?” asks the man she had that day  
wed,  
With a start, as the band plays on outside.  
“It’s the townsfolks’ cheery compliment  
Because of our marriage, my Innocent.”

“O but you don’t know ! ’Tis the passionate  
air  
To which my old Love waltzed with me,  
And I swore as we spun that none should  
share  
My home, my kisses, till death, save he !  
And he dominates me and thrills me through,  
And it’s he I embrace while embracing you ! ”

## XI

### IN THE RESTAURANT

“BUT hear. If you stay, and the child be  
born,  
It will pass as your husband's with the rest,  
While, if we fly, the teeth of scorn  
Will be gleaming at us from east to west ;  
And the child will come as a life despised ;  
I feel an elopement is ill-advised !”

“O you realize not what it is, my dear,  
To a woman ! Daily and hourly alarms  
Lest the truth should out. How can I stay  
here,  
And nightly take him into my arms !  
Come to the child no name or fame,  
Let us go, and face it, and bear the shame.”

## XII

### AT THE DRAPER'S

"I STOOD at the back of the shop, my dear,  
But you did not perceive me.  
Well, when they deliver what you were shown  
*I shall know nothing of it, believe me !*"

And he coughed and coughed as she paled  
and said,  
"O, I didn't see you come in there—  
Why couldn't you speak ?"—"Well, I didn't.  
I left  
That you should not notice I'd been there.

"You were viewing some lovely things. '*Soon  
required  
For a widow, of latest fashion*' ;  
And I knew 'twould upset you to meet the  
man  
Who had to be cold and ashen

"And screwed in a box before they could  
dress you  
*'In the last new note in mourning,'*  
As they defined it. So, not to distress you,  
I left you to your adorning."

### XIII

#### ON THE DEATH-BED

“ I’LL tell—being past all praying for—  
Then promptly die. . . . He was out at the  
war,  
And got some scent of the intimacy  
That was under way between her and me ;  
And he stole back home, and appeared like a  
ghost  
One night, at the very time almost  
That I reached her house. Well, I shot him  
dead,  
And secretly buried him. Nothing was said.

“ The news of the battle came next day ;  
He was scheduled missing. I hurried away,  
Got out there, visited the field,  
And sent home word that a search revealed  
He was one of the slain ; though, lying alone  
And stript, his body had not been known.

“ But she suspected. I lost her love,  
Yea, my hope of earth, and of Heaven above ;  
And my time’s now come, and I’ll pay the  
score,  
Though it be burning for evermore.”

## XIV

### OVER THE COFFIN

THEY stand confronting, the coffin between,  
His wife of old, and his wife of late,  
And the dead man whose they both had been  
Seems listening aloof, as to things past date.

—"I have called," says the first. "Do you  
marvel or not?"

"In truth," says the second, "I do—some-  
what."

"Well, there was a word to be said by  
me ! . . .

I divorced that man because of you—

It seemed I must do it, boundenly ;

But now I am older, and tell you true,

For life is little, and dead lies he ;

I would I had let alone you two !

And both of us, scorning parochial ways,

Had lived like the wives in the patriarchs'  
days."

XV  
IN THE MOONLIGHT

“O LONELY workman, standing there  
In a dream, why do you stare and stare  
At her grave, as no other grave there were ?

“If your great gaunt eyes so importune  
Her soul by the shine of this corpse-cold  
    moon,  
Maybe you'll raise her phantom soon !”

“Why, fool, it is what I would rather see  
Than all the living folk there be ;  
But alas, there is no such joy for me !”

“Ah—she was one you loved, no doubt,  
Through good and evil, through rain and  
    drought,  
And when she passed, all your sun went out ?”

“Nay : she was the woman I did not love,  
Whom all the others were ranked above,  
Whom during her life I thought nothing of.”



## LYRICS AND REVERIES

*(continued)*



## SELF-UNCONSCIOUS

ALONG the way  
He walked that day,  
Watching shapes that reveries limn,  
And seldom he  
Had eyes to see  
The moment that encompassed him.

Bright yellowhammers  
Made mirthful clamours,  
And billed long straws with a bustling air,  
And bearing their load  
Flew up the road  
That he followed, alone, without interest there.

From bank to ground  
And over and round  
They sidled along the adjoining hedge ;  
Sometimes to the gutter  
Their yellow flutter  
Would dip from the nearest slatestone ledge.

The smooth sea-line  
With a metal shine,  
And flashes of white, and a sail thereon,  
He would also descry  
With a half-wrapt eye  
Between the projects he mused upon.

Yes, round him were these  
Earth's artistries,  
But specious plans that came to his call  
Did most engage  
His pilgrimage,  
While himself he did not see at all.

Dead now as sherds  
Are the yellow birds,  
And all that mattered has passed away ;  
Yet God, the Elf,  
Now shows him that self  
As he was, and should have been shown, that  
day.

O it would have been good  
Could he then have stood  
At a focussed distance, and conned the whole,  
But now such vision  
Is mere derision,  
Nor soothes his body nor saves his soul.

Not much, some may  
Incline to say,  
To see therein, had it all been seen.  
Nay ! he is aware  
A thing was there  
That loomed with an immortal mien.

## THE DISCOVERY

I WANDERED to a crude coast  
Like a ghost ;  
Upon the hills I saw fires—  
Funeral pyres  
Seemingly—and heard breaking  
Waves like distant cannonades that set the  
land shaking.

And so I never once guessed  
A Love-nest,  
Bowered and candle-lit, lay  
In my way,  
Till I found a hid hollow,  
Where I burst on her my heart could not  
but follow.

## TOLERANCE

“IT is a foolish thing,” said I,  
“To bear with such, and pass it by ;  
Yet so I do, I know not why !”

And at each clash I would surmise  
That if I had acted otherwise  
I might have saved me many sighs.

But now the only happiness  
In looking back that I possess—  
Whose lack would leave me comfortless—

Is to remember I refrained  
From masteries I might have gained,  
And for my tolerance was disdained ;

For see, a tomb. And if it were  
I had bent and broke, I should not dare  
To linger in the shadows there.

## BEFORE AND AFTER SUMMER

### I

Looking forward to the spring  
One puts up with anything.  
On this February day,  
Though the winds leap down the street,  
Wintry scourgings seem but play,  
And these later shafts of sleet  
—Sharper pointed than the first—  
And these later snows—the worst—  
Are as a half-transparent blind  
Riddled by rays from sun behind.

### II

Shadows of the October pine  
Reach into this room of mine :  
On the pine there stands a bird ;  
He is shadowed with the tree.  
Mutely perched he bills no word ;  
Blank as I am even is he.  
For those happy suns are past,  
Fore-discerned in winter last.  
When went by their pleasure, then ?  
I, alas, perceived not when.

## AT DAY-CLOSE IN NOVEMBER

THE ten hours' light is abating,  
And a late bird flies across,  
Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,  
Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noon-time,  
Float past like specks in the eye ;  
I set every tree in my June time,  
And now they obscure the sky.

And the children who ramble through here  
Conceive that there never has been  
A time when no tall trees grew here,  
A time when none will be seen.

## THE YEAR'S AWAKENING

How do you know that the pilgrim track  
Along the belting zodiac  
Swept by the sun in his seeming rounds  
Is traced by now to the Fishes' bounds  
And into the Ram, when weeks of cloud  
Have wrapt the sky in a clammy shroud,  
And never as yet a tinct of spring  
Has shown in the Earth's apparelling ;  
    O vespering bird, how do you know,  
        How do you know ?

How do you know, deep underground,  
Hid in your bed from sight and sound,  
Without a turn in temperature,  
With weather life can scarce endure,  
That light has won a fraction's strength,  
And day put on some moments' length,  
Whereof in merest rote will come,  
Weeks hence, mild airs that do not numb ;  
    O crocus root, how do you know,  
        How do you know ?

*February 1910.*

## UNDER THE WATERFALL

“WHENEVER I plunge my arm, like this,  
In a basin of water, I never miss  
The sweet sharp sense of a fugitive day  
Fetched back from its thickening shroud of  
gray.

Hence the only prime  
And real love-rhyme  
That I know by heart,  
And that leaves no smart,  
Is the purl of a little valley fall  
About three spans wide and two spans tall  
Over a table of solid rock,  
And into a scoop of the self-same block ;  
The purl of a runlet that never ceases  
In stir of kingdoms, in wars, in peaces ;  
With a hollow boiling voice it speaks  
And has spoken since hills were turfless  
peaks.”

“ And why gives this the only prime  
Idea to you of a real love-rhyme ?  
And why does plunging your arm in a bowl  
Full of spring water, bring throbs to your  
soul ? ”

## 86 UNDER THE WATERFALL

“ Well, under the fall, in a crease of the stone,  
Though where precisely none ever has known,  
Jammed darkly, nothing to show how prized,  
And by now with its smoothness opalized,

Is a drinking-glass :

For, down that pass

My lover and I

Walked under a sky

Of blue with a leaf-woven awning of green,  
In the burn of August, to paint the scene,  
And we placed our basket of fruit and wine  
By the runlet's rim, where we sat to dine ;  
And when we had drunk from the glass together,

Arched by the oak-copse from the weather,  
I held the vessel to rinse in the fall,  
Where it slipped, and sank, and was past  
recall,

Though we stooped and plumbed the little  
abyss

With long bared arms. There the glass  
still is.

And, as said, if I thrust my arm below  
Cold water in basin or bowl, a throe  
From the past awakens a sense of that time,  
And the glass both used, and the cascade's  
rhyme.

The basin seems the pool, and its edge  
The hard smooth face of the brook-side ledge,  
And the leafy pattern of china-ware  
The hanging plants that were bathing there.

## UNDER THE WATERFALL 87

“By night, by day, when it shines or lours,  
There lies intact that chalice of ours,  
And its presence adds to the rhyme of love  
Persistently sung by the fall above.  
No lip has touched it since his and mine  
In turns therefrom sipped lovers' wine.”

## THE SPELL OF THE ROSE

“ I MEAN to build a hall anon,  
And shape two turrets there,  
And a broad newelled stair,  
And a cool well for crystal water ;  
Yes ; I will build a hall anon,  
Plant roses love shall feed upon,  
And apple trees and pear.”

He set to build the manor-hall,  
And shaped the turrets there,  
And the broad newelled stair,  
And the cool well for crystal water ;  
He built for me that manor-hall,  
And planted many trees withal,  
But no rose anywhere.

And as he planted never a rose  
That bears the flower of love,  
Though other flowers thrive  
A frost-wind moved our souls to sever  
Since he had planted never a rose ;  
And misconceits raised horrid shows,  
And agonies came thereof.

THE SPELL OF THE ROSE 89

“I’ll mend these miseries,” then said I,  
And so, at dead of night,  
I went and, screened from sight,  
That nought should keep our souls in sever-  
ance,  
I set a rose-bush. “This,” said I,  
“May end divisions dire and wry,  
And long-drawn days of blight.”

But I was called from earth—yea, called  
Before my rose-bush grew ;  
And would that now I knew  
What feels he of the tree I planted,  
And whether, after I was called  
To be a ghost, he, as of old,  
Gave me his heart anew !

Perhaps now blooms that queen of trees  
I set but saw not grow,  
And he, beside its glow—  
Eyes couched of the mis-vision that blurred  
me—  
Ay, there beside that queen of trees  
He sees me as I was, though sees  
Too late to tell me so !

## ST. LAUNCE'S REVISITED

SLIP back, Time !  
Yet again I am nearing  
Castle and keep, uprearing  
Gray, as in my prime.

At the inn  
Smiling close, why is it  
Not as on my visit  
When hope and I were twin ?

Groom and jade  
Whom I found here, moulder ;  
Strange the tavern-holder,  
Strange the tap-maid.

Here I hired  
Horse and man for bearing  
Me on my wayfaring  
To the door desired.

Evening gloomed  
As I journeyed forward  
To the faces shoreward,  
Till their dwelling loomed.

ST. LAUNCE'S REVISITED 91

If again  
Towards the Atlantic sea there  
I should speed, they'd be there  
Surely now as then? . . .

Why waste thought,  
When I know them vanished  
Under earth ; yea, banished  
Ever into nought.



## POEMS OF 1912–13

*Veteris vestigia flammae*



## THE GOING

WHY did you give no hint that night  
That quickly after the morrow's dawn,  
And calmly, as if indifferent quite,  
You would close your term here, up and be  
    gone  
    Where I could not follow  
    With wing of swallow  
To gain one glimpse of you ever anon !

Never to bid good-bye,  
Or give me the softest call,  
Or utter a wish for a word, while I  
Saw morning harden upon the wall,  
    Unmoved, unknowing  
    That your great going  
Had place that moment, and altered all.

Why do you make me leave the house  
And think for a breath it is you I see  
At the end of the alley of bending boughs  
Where so often at dusk you used to be ;  
    Till in darkening dankness  
    The yawning blankness  
Of the perspective sickens me !

You were she who abode  
By those red-veined rocks far West,  
You were the swan-necked one who rode  
Along the beetling Beeny Crest,  
And, reining nigh me,  
Would muse and eye me,  
While Life unrolled us its very best.

Why, then, latterly did we not speak,  
Did we not think of those days long dead,  
And ere your vanishing strive to seek  
That time's renewal? We might have said,  
"In this bright spring weather  
We'll visit together  
Those places that once we visited."

Well, well! All's past amend,  
Unchangeable. It must go.  
I seem but a dead man held on end  
To sink down soon. . . . O you could not  
know  
That such swift fleeing  
No soul foreseeing—  
Not even I—would undo me so!

*December 1912.*

## YOUR LAST DRIVE

HERE by the moorway you returned,  
And saw the borough lights ahead  
That lit your face—all undiscerned  
To be in a week the face of the dead,  
And you told of the charm of that haloed  
view  
That never again would beam on you.

And on your left you passed the spot  
Where eight days later you were to lie,  
And be spoken of as one who was not ;  
Beholding it with a cursory eye  
As alien from you, though under its tree  
You soon would halt everlastingly.

I drove not with you. . . . Yet had I sat  
At your side that eve I should not have seen  
That the countenance I was glancing at  
Had a last-time look in the flickering sheen,  
Nor have read the writing upon your face,  
“I go hence soon to my resting-place ;

“You may miss me then. But I shall not  
know

How many times you visit me there,  
Or what your thoughts are, or if you go  
There never at all. And I shall not care.  
Should you censure me I shall take no heed  
And even your praises I shall not need.”

True: never you'll know. And you will  
not mind.

But shall I then slight you because of such?  
Dear ghost, in the past did you ever find  
The thought “What profit?” move me much  
Yet the fact indeed remains the same,  
You are past love, praise, indifference, blame.

*December 1912.*

## THE WALK

You did not walk with me  
Of late to the hill-top tree  
    By the gated ways,  
    As in earlier days ;  
    You were weak and lame,  
    So you never came,  
And I went alone, and I did not mind,  
Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day  
Just in the former way :  
    Surveyed around  
    The familiar ground  
    By myself again :  
    What difference, then ?  
Only that underlying sense  
Of the look of a room on returning thence.

## RAIN ON A GRAVE

CLOUDS spout upon her  
Their waters amain  
In ruthless disdain,—  
Her who but lately  
Had shivered with pain  
As at touch of dishonour  
If there had lit on her  
So coldly, so straightly  
Such arrows of rain.

She who to shelter  
Her delicate head  
Would quicken and quicken  
Each tentative tread  
If drops chanced to pelt her  
That summertime spills  
In dust-paven rills  
When thunder-clouds thicken  
And birds close their bills.

Would that I lay there  
And she were housed here !

Or better, together  
Were folded away there  
Exposed to one weather  
We both,—who would stray there  
When sunny the day there,  
Or evening was clear  
At the prime of the year.

Soon will be growing  
Green blades from her mound,  
And daises be showing  
Like stars on the ground,  
Till she form part of them—  
Ay—the sweet heart of them,  
Loved beyond measure  
With a child's pleasure  
All her life's round.

*Jan. 31, 1913.*

## “I FOUND HER OUT THERE”

I FOUND her out there  
On a slope few see,  
That falls westwardly  
To the salt-edged air,  
Where the ocean breaks  
On the purple strand,  
And the hurricane shakes  
The solid land.

I brought her here,  
And have laid her to rest  
In a noiseless nest  
No sea beats near.  
She will never be stirred  
In her loamy cell  
By the waves long heard  
And loved so well.

So she does not sleep  
By those haunted heights  
The Atlantic smites  
And the blind gales sweep,

Whence she often would gaze  
At Dundagel's far head,  
While the dipping blaze  
Dyed her face fire-red ;

And would sigh at the tale  
Of sunk Lyonesse,  
As a wind-tugged tress  
Flapped her cheek like a flail ;  
Or listen at whiles  
With a thought-bound brow  
To the murmuring miles  
She is far from now.

Yet her shade, maybe,  
Will creep underground  
Till it catch the sound  
Of that western sea  
As it swells and sobs  
Where she once domiciled,  
And joy in its throbs  
With the heart of a child.

## WITHOUT CEREMONY

IT was your way, my dear,  
To be gone without a word  
When callers, friends, or kin  
Had left, and I hastened in  
To rejoin you, as I inferred.

And when you'd a mind to career  
Off anywhere—say to town—  
You were all on a sudden gone  
Before I had thought thereon,  
Or noticed your trunks were down.

So, now that you disappear  
For ever in that swift style,  
Your meaning seems to me  
Just as it used to be :  
“ Good-bye is not worth while ! ”

## LAMENT

How she would have loved  
A party to-day !—  
Bright-hatted and gloved,  
With table and tray  
And chairs on the lawn  
Her smiles would have shone  
With welcomings. . . . But  
She is shut, she is shut  
    From friendship's spell  
    In the jailing shell  
    Of her tiny cell.

Or she would have reigned  
At a dinner to-night  
With ardours unfeigned,  
And a generous delight ;  
All in her abode  
She'd have freely bestowed  
On her guests. . . . But alas,  
She is shut under grass  
    Where no cups flow,  
    Powerless to know  
    That it might be so.

And she would have sought  
With a child's eager glance  
The shy snowdrops brought  
By the new year's advance,  
And peered in the rime  
Of Candlemas-time  
For crocuses . . . chanced  
It that she were not tranced  
    From sights she loved best ;  
    Wholly possessed  
    By an infinite rest !

And we are here staying  
Amid these stale things  
Who care not for gaying,  
And those junketings  
That used so to joy her,  
And never to cloy her  
As us they cloy ! . . . But  
She is shut, she is shut  
    From the cheer of them, dead  
    To all done and said  
    In a yew-arched bed.

## THE HAUNTER

He does not think that I haunt here nightly :  
    How shall I let him know  
That whither his fancy sets him wandering  
    I, too, alertly go ?—  
Hover and hover a few feet from him  
    Just as I used to do,  
But cannot answer his words addressed me—  
    Only listen thereto !

When I could answer he did not say them :  
    When I could let him know  
How I would like to join in his journeys  
    Seldom he wished to go.  
Now that he goes and wants me with him  
    More than he used to do,  
Never he sees my faithful phantom  
    Though he speaks thereto.

Yes, I accompany him to places  
    Only dreamers know,  
Where the shy hares limp long paces,  
    Where the night rooks go ;

Into old aisles where the past is all to him,  
Close as his shade can do,  
Always lacking the power to call to him,  
Near as I reach thereto !

What a good haunter I am, O tell him,  
Quickly make him know  
If he but sigh since my loss befell him  
Straight to his side I go.  
Tell him a faithful one is doing  
All that love can do  
Still that his path may be worth pursuing,  
And to bring peace thereto.

## THE VOICE

WOMAN much missed, how you call to me,  
    call to me,  
Saying that now you are not as you were  
When you had changed from the one who  
    was all to me,  
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you,  
    then,  
Standing as when I drew near to the town  
Where you would wait for me : yes, as I  
    knew you then,  
Even to the original air-blue gown !

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness  
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,  
You being ever consigned to existlessness,  
Heard no more again far or near ?

Thus I ; faltering forward,  
Leaves around me falling,  
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from  
    norward  
And the woman calling.

*December 1912.*

## HIS VISITOR

I COME across from Mellstock while the moon  
wastes weaker  
To behold where I lived with you for twenty  
years and more :  
I shall go in the gray, at the passing of the  
mail-train,  
And need no setting open of the long familiar  
door  
As before.

The change I notice in my once own quarters !  
A brilliant budded border where the daisies  
used to be,  
The rooms new painted, and the pictures  
altered,  
And other cups and saucers, and no cozy nook  
for tea  
As with me.

I discern the dim faces of the sleep-wrapt  
servants ;  
They are not those who tended me through  
feeble hours and strong,

## HIS VISITOR

III

But strangers quite, who never knew my rule  
    here,  
Who never saw me painting, never heard my  
    softling song  
    Float along.

So I don't want to linger in this re-decked  
    dwelling,  
I feel too uneasy at the contrasts I behold,  
And I make again for Mellstock to return  
    here never,  
And rejoin the roomy silence, and the mute  
    and manifold  
    Souls of old.

## A CIRCULAR

As "legal representative"  
I read a missive not my own,  
On new designs the senders give  
    For clothes, in tints as shown.

Here figure blouses, gowns for tea,  
And presentation-trains of state,  
Charming ball-dresses, millinery,  
    Warranted up to date.

And this gay-pictured, spring-time shout  
Of Fashion, hails what lady proud?  
Her who before last year was out  
    Was costumed in a shroud.

## A DREAM OR NO

WHY go to Saint-Juliot? What's Juliot  
to me?

I was but made fancy  
By some necromancy  
That much of my life claims the spot as its  
key.

Yes. I have had dreams of that place in the  
West,  
And a maiden abiding  
Thereat as in hiding ;  
Fair-eyed and white-shouldered, broad-browed  
and brown-tressed.

And of how, coastward bound on a night  
long ago,  
There lonely I found her,  
The sea-birds around her,  
And other than nigh things uncaring to know.

So sweet her life there (in my thought has it  
seemed)

That quickly she drew me

To take her unto me,

And lodge her long years with me. Such have  
I dreamed.

But nought of that maid from Saint-Juliot I  
see ;

Can she ever have been here,

And shed her life's sheen here,

The woman I thought a long housemate with  
me ?

Does there even a place like Saint-Juliot exist ?

Or a Vallency Valley

With stream and leafed alley,

Or Beeny, or Bos with its flounce flinging  
mist ?

*February 1913.*

## AFTER A JOURNEY

HERETO I come to interview a ghost ;  
Whither, O whither will its whim now  
draw me ?  
Up the cliff, down, till I'm lonely, lost,  
And the unseen waters' ejaculations awe me.  
Where you will next be there's no knowing,  
Facing round about me everywhere,  
With your nut-coloured hair,  
And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and  
going.

Yes : I have re-entered your olden haunts  
at last ;  
Through the years, through the dead scenes  
I have tracked you ;  
What have you now found to say of our  
past—  
Viewed across the dark space wherein I  
have lacked you ?  
Summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought  
division ?  
Things were not lastly as firstly well  
With us twain, you tell ?  
But all's closed now, despite Time's derision.

116      AFTER A JOURNEY

I see what you are doing : you are leading  
me on

To the spots we knew when we haunted  
here together,

The waterfall, above which the mist-bow  
shone

At the then fair hour in the then fair  
weather,

And the cave just under, with a voice still  
so hollow

That it seems to call out to me from forty  
years ago,

When you were all aglow,

And not the thin ghost that I now frailly  
follow !

Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,  
The waked birds preen and the seals flop  
lazily,

Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,  
For the stars close their shutters and the  
dawn whitens hazily.

Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours,  
The bringing me here ; nay, bring me here  
again !

I am just the same as when  
Our days were a joy, and our paths through  
flowers.

## A DEATH-DAY RECALLED

BEENY did not quiver,  
Juliot grew not gray,  
Thin Valency's river  
Held its wonted way.  
Bos seemed not to utter  
Dimmest note of dirge,  
Targan mouth a mutter  
To its creamy surge.

Yet though these, unheeding,  
Listless, passed the hour  
Of her spirit's speeding,  
She had, in her flower,  
Sought and loved the places—  
Much and often pined  
For their lonely faces  
When in towns confined.

Why did not Valency  
In his purl deplore  
One whose haunts were whence he  
Drew his limpid store ?

118 A DEATH-DAY RECALLED

Why did Bos not thunder,  
Targan apprehend  
Body and breath were sunder  
Of their former friend ?

## BEENY CLIFF

*March 1870—March 1913*

### I

O THE opal and the sapphire of that wandering  
western sea,  
And the woman riding high above with bright  
hair flapping free—  
The woman whom I loved so, and who  
loyally loved me.

### II

The pale mews plained below us, and the  
waves seemed far away  
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their  
ceaseless babbling say,  
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that  
clear-sunned March day.

## III

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew  
    an irised rain,  
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull  
    misfeatured stain,  
And then the sun burst out again, and purples  
    prinked the main.

## IV

—Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old  
    Beeny to the sky,  
And shall she and I not go there once again  
    now March is nigh,  
And the sweet things said in that March say  
    anew there by and by?

## V

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that  
    wild weird western shore,  
The woman now is—elsewhere—whom the  
    ambling pony bore,  
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will  
    see it nevermore.

## AT CASTLE BOTEREL

As I drive to the junction of lane and high-  
way,  
And the drizzle bedrenches the waggonette,  
I look behind at the fading byway,  
And see on its slope, now glistening wet,  
Distinctly yet

Myself and a girlish form benighted  
In dry March weather. We climb the  
road  
Beside a chaise. We had just alighted  
To ease the sturdy pony's load  
When he sighed and slowed.

What we did as we climbed, and what we  
talked of  
Matters not much, nor to what it led,—  
Something that life will not be balked of  
Without rude reason till hope is dead,  
And feeling fled.

It filled but a minute. But was there ever  
A time of such quality, since or before,  
In that hill's story? To one mind never,  
Though it has been climbed, foot-swift,  
foot-sore,  
By thousands more.

Primaeval rocks form the road's steep border,  
And much have they faced there, first and  
last,  
Of the transitory in Earth's long order ;  
But what they record in colour and cast  
Is—that we two passed.

And to me, though Time's unflinching rigour,  
In mindless rote, has ruled from sight  
The substance now, one phantom figure  
Remains on the slope, as when that night  
Saw us alight.

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,  
I look back at it amid the rain  
For the very last time ; for my sand is sinking,  
And I shall traverse old love's domain  
Never again.

*March 1913.*

## PLACES

NOBODY says : Ah, that is the place  
Where chanced, in the hollow of years ago,  
What none of the Three Towns cared to  
know—

The birth of a little girl of grace—  
The sweetest the house saw, first or last ;  
Yet it was so  
On that day long past.

Nobody thinks : There, there she lay  
In a room by the Hoe, like the bud of a  
flower,  
And listened, just after the bedtime hour,  
To the stammering chimes that used to play  
The quaint Old Hundred -and - Thirteenth  
tune  
In Saint Andrew's tower  
Night, morn, and noon.

Nobody calls to mind that here  
Upon Boterel Hill, where the carters skid,

With cheeks whose airy flush outbid  
Fresh fruit in bloom, and free of fear,  
She cantered down, as if she must fall  
    (Though she never did),  
    To the charm of all.

Nay : one there is to whom these things,  
That nobody else's mind calls back,  
Have a savour that scenes in being lack,  
And a presence more than the actual brings  
To whom to-day is beneaped and stale,  
    And its urgent clack  
    But a vapid tale.

PLYMOUTH, *March* 1913.

## THE PHANTOM HORSEWOMAN

### I

QUEER are the ways of a man I know :  
He comes and stands  
In a careworn craze,  
And looks at the sands  
And the seaward haze,  
With moveless hands  
And face and gaze,  
Then turns to go . . .  
And what does he see when he gazes so ?

### II

They say he sees as an instant thing  
More clear than to-day,  
A sweet soft scene  
That once was in play  
By that briny green ;  
Yes, notes alway  
Warm, real, and keen,  
What his back years bring—  
A phantom of his own figuring.

## 126 THE PHANTOM HORSEWOMAN

### III

Of this vision of his they might say more :  
    Not only there  
    Does he see this sight,  
    But everywhere  
    In his brain—day, night,  
    As if on the air  
    It were drawn rose bright—  
    Yea, far from that shore  
Does he carry this vision of heretofore :

### IV

A ghost-girl-rider. And though, toil-tried,  
    He withers daily,  
    Time touches her not,  
    But she still rides gaily  
    In his rapt thought  
    On that shagged and shaly  
    Atlantic spot,  
    And as when first eyed  
Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.

•

## MISCELLANEOUS PIECES



## THE WISTFUL LADY

"LOVE, while you were away there came to  
me—

From whence I cannot tell—  
A plaintive lady pale and passionless,  
Who bent her eyes upon me critically,  
And weighed me with a wearing wistfulness,  
As if she knew me well."

"I saw no lady of that wistful sort  
As I came riding home.  
Perhaps she was some dame the Fates constrain  
By memories sadder than she can support,  
Or by unhappy vacancy of brain,  
To leave her roof and roam?"

"Ah, but she knew me. And before this  
time  
I have seen her, lending ear  
To my light outdoor words, and pondering  
each,  
Her frail white finger swayed in pantomime,  
As if she fain would close with me in speech,  
And yet would not come near.

130      THE WISTFUL LADY

“And once I saw her beckoning with her  
    hand  
    As I came into sight  
At an upper window. And I at last went  
    out ;  
But when I reached where she had seemed  
    to stand,  
And wandered up and down and searched  
    about,  
    I found she had vanished quite.”

Then thought I how my dead Love used  
    to say,  
    With a small smile, when she  
Was waning wan, that she would hover round  
And show herself after her passing day  
To any newer Love I might have found,  
    But show her not to me.

## THE WOMAN IN THE RYE

“WHY do you stand in the dripping rye,  
Cold-lipped, unconscious, wet to the knee,  
When there are firesides near ?” said I.

“I told him I wished him dead,” said she.

“Yea, cried it in my haste to one  
Whom I had loved, whom I well loved still  
And die he did. And I hate the sun,  
And stand here lonely, aching, chill ;

“Stand waiting, waiting under skies  
That blow reproach, the while I see  
The rooks sheer off to where he lies  
Wrapt in a peace withheld from me.”

## THE CHEVAL-GLASS

WHY do you harbour that great cheval-glass  
Filling up your narrow room ?  
You never preen or plume,  
Or look in a week at your full-length figure—  
Picture of bachelor gloom !

“ Well, when I dwelt in ancient England,  
Renting the valley farm,  
Thoughtless of all heart-harm,  
I used to gaze at the parson’s daughter,  
A creature of nameless charm.

“ Thither there came a lover and won her,  
Carried her off from my view.  
O it was then I knew  
Misery of a cast undreamt of—  
More than, indeed, my due !

“ Then far rumours of her ill-usage  
Came, like a chilling breath  
When a man languisheth ;  
Followed by news that her mind lost balance,  
And, in a space, of her death.

“Soon sank her father ; and next was the  
 auction—

Everything to be sold :  
 Mid things new and old  
 Stood this glass in her former chamber,  
 Long in her use, I was told.

“Well, I awaited the sale and bought it. . . .  
 There by my bed it stands,  
 And as the dawn expands  
 Often I see her pale-faced form there  
 Brushing her hair’s bright bands.

“There, too, at pallid midnight moments  
 Quick she will come to my call,  
 Smile from the frame withal  
 Ponderingly, as she used to regard me  
 Passing her father’s wall.

“So that it was for its revelations  
 I brought it oversea,  
 And drag it about with me. . . .  
 Anon I shall break it and bury its fragments  
 Where my grave is to be.”

## THE RE-ENACTMENT

BETWEEN the folding sea-downs,  
In the gloom  
Of a wailful wintry nightfall,  
When the boom  
Of the ocean, like a hammering in a hollow  
tomb,

Throbbled up the copse-clothed valley  
From the shore  
To the chamber where I darkled,  
Sunk and sore  
With gray ponderings why my Loved one  
had not come before

To salute me in the dwelling  
That of late  
I had hired to waste a while in—  
Vague of date,  
Quaint, and remote—wherein I now expectant  
sate ;

On the solitude, unsignalled,  
    Broke a man  
Who, in air as if at home there,  
    Seemed to scan  
Every fire-flecked nook of the apartment  
    span by span.

A stranger's and no lover's  
    Eyes were these,  
Eyes of a man who measures  
    What he sees  
But vaguely, as if wrapt in filmy phantasies.

Yea, his bearing was so absent  
    As he stood,  
It bespoke a chord so plaintive  
    In his mood,  
That soon I judged he would not wrong my  
    quietude.

“Ah—the supper is just ready,”  
    Then he said,  
“And the years’-long binned Madeira  
    Flashes red!”  
(There was no wine, no food, no supper-table  
    spread.)

“You will forgive my coming,  
    Lady fair?  
I see you as at that time  
    Rising there,  
The self-same curious querying in your eyes  
    and air.

136      THE RE-ENACTMENT

“Yet no. How so? You wear not  
The same gown,  
Your locks show woful difference,  
Are not brown :  
What, is it not as when I hither came from  
town?

“And the place. . . . But you seem  
other—  
Can it be?  
What’s this that Time is doing  
Unto me?  
*You* dwell here, unknown woman? . . .  
Whereabouts, then, is she?

“And the house - things are much  
shifted.—  
Put them where  
They stood on this night’s fellow ;  
Shift her chair :  
Here was the couch : and the piano should  
be there.”

I indulged him, verily nerve-strained  
Being alone,  
And I moved the things as bidden,  
One by one,  
And feigned to push the old piano where he  
had shown.

“ Aha—now I can see her !  
     Stand aside :  
 Don't thrust her from the table  
     Where, meek-eyed,  
 She makes attempt with matron-manners to  
     preside.

“ She serves me : now she rises,  
     Goes to play. . . .  
 But you obstruct her, fill her  
     With dismay,  
 And embarrassed, scared, she vanishes away ! ”

And, as 'twere useless longer  
     To persist,  
 He sighed, and sought the entry  
     Ere I wist,  
 And retreated, disappearing soundless in the  
     mist.

That here some mighty passion  
     Once had burned,  
 Which still the walls enghosted,  
     I discerned,  
 And that by its strong spell mine might be  
     overturned.

I sat depressed ; till, later,  
     My Love came ;

138      THE RE-ENACTMENT

But something in the chamber  
    Dimmed our flame,—  
An emanation, making our due words fall  
    tame,

As if the intenser drama  
    Shown me there  
Of what the walls had witnessed  
    Filled the air,  
And left no room for later passion anywhere.

So came it that our fervours  
    Did quite fail  
Of future consummation—  
    Being made quail  
By the weird witchery of the parlour's hidden  
    tale,

Which I, as years passed, faintly  
    Learnt to trace,—  
One of sad love, born full-winged  
    In that place  
Where the predestined sorrowers first stood  
    face to face.

And as that month of winter  
    Circles round,  
And the evening of the date-day  
    Grows embrowned,  
I am conscious of those presences, and sit  
    spellbound.

There, often—lone, forsaken—  
    Queries breed  
Within me ; whether a phantom  
    Had my heed  
On that strange night, or was it some wrecked  
    heart indeed ?

## HER SECRET

THAT love's dull smart distressed my heart  
    He shrewdly learnt to see,  
But that I was in love with a dead man  
    Never suspected he.

He searched for the trace of a pictured face,  
    He watched each missive come,  
And a note that seemed like a love-line  
    Made him look frozen and glum.

He dogged my feet to the city street,  
    He followed me to the sea,  
But not to the neighbouring churchyard  
    Did he dream of following me.

## “SHE CHARGED ME”

SHE charged me with having said this and that  
To another woman long years before,  
In the very parlour where we sat,—

Sat on a night when the endless pour  
Of rain on the roof and the road below  
Bent the spring of the spirit more and  
more. . . .

—So charged she me ; and the Cupid’s bow  
Of her mouth was hard, and her eyes, and  
her face,  
And her white forefinger lifted slow.

Had she done it gently, or shown a trace  
That not too curiously would she view  
A folly passed ere her reign had place,

A kiss might have ended it. But I knew  
From the fall of each word, and the pause  
between,  
That the curtain would drop upon us two  
Ere long, in our play of slave and queen.

## THE NEWCOMER'S WIFE

HE paused on the sill of a door ajar  
That screened a lively liquor-bar,  
For the name had reached him through the  
door  
Of her he had married the week before.

“ We called her the Hack of the Parade ;  
But she was discreet in the games she played ;  
If slightly worn, she's pretty yet,  
And gossips, after all, forget.

“ And he knows nothing of her past ;  
I am glad the girl's in luck at last ;  
Such ones, though stale to native eyes,  
Newcomers snatch at as a prize.”

“ Yes, being a stranger he sees her blent  
Of all that's fresh and innocent,  
Nor dreams how many a love-campaign  
She had enjoyed before his reign ! ”

That night there was the splash of a fall  
Over the slimy harbour-wall :  
They searched, and at the deepest place  
Found him with crabs upon his face.

## A CONVERSATION AT DAWN

HE lay awake, with a harassed air,  
And she, in her cloud of loose lank hair,  
    Seemed trouble-tried  
As the dawn drew in on their faces there.

The chamber looked far over the sea  
From a white hotel on a white-stoned quay,  
    And stepping a stride  
He parted the window-drapery.

Above the level horizon spread  
The sunrise, firing them foot to head  
    From its smouldering lair,  
And painting their pillows with dyes of red.

“What strange disquiets have stirred you,  
    dear,  
This dragging night, with starts in fear  
    Of me, as it were,  
Or of something evil hovering near?”

144 A CONVERSATION AT DAWN

“ My husband, can I have fear of you ?  
What should one fear from a man whom few,  
Or none, had matched  
In that late long spell of delays undue ! ”

He watched her eyes in the heaving sun :  
“ Then what has kept, O reticent one,  
Those lids unlatched—  
Anything promised I’ve not yet done ? ”

“ O it’s not a broken promise of yours  
(For what quite lightly your lip assures  
The due time brings)  
That has troubled my sleep, and no waking  
cures ! ” . . .

“ I have shaped my will ; ’tis at hand,” said  
he ;  
“ I subscribe it to-day, that no risk there be  
In the hap of things  
Of my leaving you menaced by poverty.”

“ That a boon provision I’m safe to get,  
Signed, sealed by my lord as it were a debt,  
I cannot doubt,  
Or ever this peering sun be set.”

“ But you flung my arms away from your side,  
And faced the wall. No month-old bride  
Ere the tour be out  
In an air so loth can be justified ?

A CONVERSATION AT DAWN 145

“ Ah—had you a male friend once loved well,  
Upon whose suit disaster fell  
    And frustrance swift ?  
Honest you are, and may care to tell.”

She lay impassive, and nothing broke  
The stillness other than, stroke by stroke,  
    The lazy lift  
Of the tide below them ; till she spoke :

“ I once had a friend—a Love, if you will—  
Whose wife forsook him, and sank until  
    She was made a thrall  
In a prison-cell for a deed of ill. . . .

“ He remained alone ; and we met—to love,  
But barring legitimate joy thereof  
    Stood a doorless wall,  
Though we prized each other all else above.

“ And this was why, though I'd touched my  
    prime,  
I put off suitors from time to time—  
    Yourself with the rest—  
Till friends, who approved you, called it  
    crime,

“ And when misgivings weighed on me  
In my lover's absence, hurriedly,  
    And much distress,  
I took you. . . . Ah, that such could  
    be ! . . .

146 A CONVERSATION AT DAWN

“ Now, saw you when crossing from yonder  
shore

At yesternoon, that the packet bore  
On a white-wreathed bier  
A coffined body towards the fore ?

“ Well, while you stood at the other end,  
The loungers talked, and I could but lend  
A listening ear,  
For they named the dead. ’Twas the wife of  
my friend.

“ He was there, but did not note me, veiled,  
Yet I saw that a joy, as of one unjailed,  
Now shone in his gaze ;  
He knew not his hope of me just had failed !

“ They had brought her home : she was born  
in this isle ;  
And he will return to his domicile,  
And pass his days  
Alone, and not as he dreamt erstwhile ! ”

“ —So you’ve lost a sprucer spouse than I ! ”  
She held her peace, as if fain deny  
She would indeed  
For his pleasure’s sake, but could lip no lie.

“ One far less formal and plain and slow ! ”  
She let the laconic assertion go  
As if of need  
She held the conviction that it was so.

## A CONVERSATION AT DAWN 147

“ Regard me as his he always should,  
He had said, and wed me he vowed he would  
    In his prime or sere  
Most verily do, if ever he could.

“ And this fulfilment is now his aim,  
For a letter, addressed in my maiden name,  
    Has dogged me here,  
Reminding me faithfully of his claim.

“ And it started a hope like a lightning-streak  
That I might go to him—say for a week—  
    And afford you right  
To put me away, and your vows unspeak.

“ To be sure you have said, as of dim intent,  
That marriage is a plain event  
    Of black and white,  
Without any ghost of sentiment,

“ And my heart has quailed.—But deny it  
    true  
That you will never this lock undo !  
    No God intends  
To thwart the yearning He’s father to ! ”

The husband hemmed, then blandly bowed  
In the light of the angry morning cloud.  
    “ So my idyll ends,  
And a drama opens ! ” he mused aloud ;

148 A CONVERSATION AT DAWN

And his features froze. "You may take it  
as true  
That I will never this lock undo  
For so depraved  
A passion as that which kindles you."

Said she : "I am sorry you see it so ;  
I had hoped you might have let me go,  
And thus been saved  
The pain of learning there's more to know."

"More? What may that be? Gad, I think  
You have told me enough to make me blink!  
Yet if more remain  
Then own it to me. I will not shrink!"

"Well, it is this. As we could not see  
That a legal marriage could ever be,  
To end our pain  
We united ourselves informally ;

"And vowed at a chancel-altar nigh,  
With book and ring, a lifelong tie ;  
A contract vain  
To the world, but real to Him on High."

"And you became as his wife?"—"I did."—  
He stood as stiff as a caryatid,  
And said, "Indeed! . . .  
No matter. You're mine, whatever you've  
hid!"

## A CONVERSATION AT DAWN 149

“But is it right! When I only gave  
My hand to you in a sweat to save,  
Through desperate need  
(As I thought), my fame, for I was not brave!”

“To save your fame? Your meaning is dim,  
For nobody knew of your altar-whim?”

“I mean—I feared  
There might be fruit of my tie with him;

“And to cloak it by marriage I’m not the first,  
Though, maybe, morally most accurst  
Through your unpeered  
And strict uprightness. That’s the worst!

“While yesterday his worn contours  
Convinced me that love like his endures,  
And that my troth-plight  
Had been his, in fact, and not truly yours.”

“So, my lady, you raise the veil by degrees. . . .  
I own this last is enough to freeze  
The warmest wight!  
Now hear the other side, if you please:

“I did say once, though without intent,  
That marriage is a plain event  
Of black and white,  
Whatever may be its sentiment.

## 150 A CONVERSATION AT DAWN

"I'll act accordingly, none the less  
That you soiled the contract in time of stress,  
    Thereto induced  
By the feared results of your wantonness.

"But the thing is over, and no one knows,  
And it's nought to the future what you disclose.  
    That you'll be loosed  
For such an episode, don't suppose !

"No : I'll not free you. And if it appear  
There was too good ground for your first fear  
    From your amorous tricks,  
I'll father the child. Yes, by God, my dear.

"Even should you fly to his arms, I'll damn  
Opinion, and fetch you ; treat as sham  
    Your mutinous kicks,  
And whip you home. That's the sort I am !"

She whitened. "Enough. . . . Since you  
    disapprove  
I'll yield in silence, and never move  
    Till my last pulse ticks  
A footstep from the domestic groove."

"Then swear it," he said, "and your king  
    uncrown."  
He drew her forth in her long white gown,  
    And she knelt and swore.  
"Good. Now you may go and again lie down.

A CONVERSATION AT DAWN 151

“Since you’ve played these pranks and given  
no sign,  
You shall crave this man of yours ; pine and  
pine  
With sighings sore,  
’Till I’ve starved your love for him ; nailed  
you mine.

“I’m a practical man, and want no tears ;  
You’ve made a fool of me, it appears ;  
That you don’t again  
Is a lesson I’ll teach you in future years.”

She answered not, but lay listlessly  
With her dark dry eyes on the coppery sea,  
That now and then  
Flung its lazy founce at the neighbouring  
quay.

## A KING'S SOLILOQUY

ON THE NIGHT OF HIS FUNERAL

FROM the slow march and muffled drum  
And crowds distrest,  
And book and bell, at length I have come  
To my full rest.

A ten years' rule beneath the sun  
Is wound up here,  
And what I have done, what left undone,  
Figures out clear.

Yet in the estimate of such  
It grieves me more  
That I by some was loved so much  
Than that I bore,

From others, judgment of that hue  
Which over-hope  
Breeds from a theoretic view  
Of regal scope.

For kingly opportunities  
Right many have sighed ;  
How best to bear its devilries  
Those learn who have tried !

I have eaten the fat and drunk the sweet,  
Lived the life out  
From the first greeting glad drum-beat  
To the last shout.

What pleasure earth affords to kings  
I have enjoyed  
Through its long vivid pulse-stirrings  
Even till it cloyed.

What days of drudgery, nights of stress  
Can cark a throne,  
Even one maintained in peacefulness,  
I too have known.

And so, I think, could I step back  
To life again,  
I should prefer the average track  
Of average men,

Since, as with them, what kingship would  
It cannot do,  
Nor to first thoughts however good  
Hold itself true.

Something binds hard the royal hand,  
As all that be,  
And it is That has shaped, has planned  
My acts and me.

## THE CORONATION

AT Westminster, hid from the light of day,  
Many who once had shone as monarchs lay.

Edward the Pious, and two Edwards more,  
The second Richard, Henrys three or four ;

That is to say, those who were called the  
Third,  
Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth (the much self-  
widowed),

And James the Scot, and near him Charles  
the Second,  
And, too, the second George could there be  
reckoned.

Of women, Mary and Queen Elizabeth,  
And Anne, all silent in a musing death ;

And William's Mary, and Mary, Queen of  
Scots,  
And consort-queens whose names oblivion blots ;

And several more whose chronicle one sees  
Adorning ancient royal pedigrees.

—Now, as they drowed on, freed from Life's  
old thrall,

And heedless, save of things exceptional,

Said one : " What means this throbbing  
thudding sound

That reaches to us here from overground ;

" A sound of chisels, augers, planes, and saws,  
Infringing all ecclesiastic laws ?

" And these tons-weight of timber on us  
pressed,  
Unfelt here since we entered into rest ?

" Surely, at least to us, being corpses royal,  
A meet repose is owing by the loyal ? "

"—Perhaps a scaffold ! " Mary Stuart sighed,  
" If such still be. It was that way I died. "

"—Ods ! Far more like," said he the many-  
wived,

" That for a wedding 'tis this work's contrived.

" Ha-ha ! I never would bow down to Rimmon,  
But I had a rare time with those six women ! "

" Not all at once ? " gasped he who loved  
confession.

“Nay, nay!” said Hal. “That would have been transgression.”

“—They build a catafalque here, black and tall, Perhaps,” mused Richard, “for some funeral?”

And Anne chimed in: “Ah, yes: it may be so!”  
“Nay!” squeaked Eliza. “Little you seem to know—

“Clearly ’tis for some crowning here in state,  
As they crowned us at our long bygone date;

“Though we’d no such a power of carpentry,  
But let the ancient architecture be;

“If I were up there where the parsons sit,  
In one of my gold robes, I’d see to it!”

“But you are not,” Charles chuckled. “You are here,  
And never will know the sun again, my dear!”

“Yea,” whispered those whom no one had addressed;

“With slow, sad march, amid a folk distressed,  
We were brought here, to take our dusty rest.

“And here, alas, in darkness laid below,  
We’ll wait and listen, and endure the show. . . .  
Clamour dogs kingship; afterwards not so!”

## AQUAE SULIS

THE chimes called midnight, just at interlune,  
And the daytime talk of the Roman investigations  
Was checked by silence, save for the husky  
tune  
The bubbling waters played near the excavations.

And a warm air came up from underground,  
And a flutter, as of a filmy shape un-  
sepulchred,  
That collected itself, and waited, and looked  
around :  
Nothing was seen, but utterances could be  
heard :

Those of the goddess whose shrine was beneath  
the pile  
Of the God with the baldachined altar over-  
head :  
“ And what did you get by raising this nave  
and aisle  
Close on the site of the temple I tenanted ?

“The notes of your organ have thrilled down  
out of view  
To the earth-clogged wrecks of my edifice  
many a year,  
Though stately and shining once—ay, long  
ere you  
Had set up crucifix and candle here.

“Your priests have trampled the dust of mine  
without rueing,  
Despising the joys of man whom I so much  
loved,  
Though my springs boil on by your Gothic  
arcades and pewing,  
And sculptures crude. . . . Would Jove they  
could be removed !”

“—Repress, O lady proud, your traditional  
ires ;  
You know not by what a frail thread we  
equally hang ;  
It is said we are images both—twitched by  
people’s desires ;  
And that I, like you, fail as a song men  
yesterday sang !”

And the olden dark hid the cavities late laid  
bare,  
And all was suspended and soundless as before,

Except for a gossamery noise fading off in  
the air,  
And the boiling voice of the waters' medicinal  
pour.

BATH.

## SEVENTY-FOUR AND TWENTY

HERE goes a man of seventy-four,  
Who sees not what life means for him,  
And here another in years a score  
Who reads its very figure and trim.

The one who shall walk to-day with me  
Is not the youth who gazes far,  
But the breezy wight who cannot see  
What Earth's ingrained conditions are.

## THE ELOPEMENT

“A WOMAN never agreed to it!” said my  
knowing friend to me.

“That one thing she’d refuse to do for  
Solomon’s mines in fee:

No woman ever will make herself look older  
than she is.”

I did not answer; but I thought, “you err  
there, ancient Quiz.”

It took a rare one, true, to do it; for she was  
surely rare—

As rare a soul at that sweet time of her life  
as she was fair.

And urging motives, too, were strong, for  
ours was a passionate case,

Yea, passionate enough to lead to freking  
with that young face.

I have told no one about it, should perhaps  
make few believe,

But I think it over now that life looms dull  
and years bereave,

How blank we stood at our bright wits' end,  
two frail barks in distress,  
How self-regard in her was slain by her large  
tenderness.

I said : " The only chance for us in a crisis  
of this kind  
Is going it thorough ! "—" Yes," she calmly  
breathed. " Well, I don't mind."  
And we blanched her dark locks ruthlessly :  
set wrinkles on her brow ;  
Ay—she was a right rare woman then, what-  
ever she may be now.

That night we heard a coach drive up, and  
questions asked below.  
" A gent with an elderly wife, sir," was re-  
turned from the bureau.  
And the wheels went rattling on, and free at  
last from public ken  
We washed all off in her chamber and restored  
her youth again.

How many years ago it was ! Some fifty  
can it be  
Since that adventure held us, and she played  
old wife to me ?  
But in time convention won her, as it wins  
all women at last,  
And now she is rich and respectable, and  
time has buried the past.

## “I ROSE UP AS MY CUSTOM IS”

I ROSE up as my custom is  
On the eve of All-Souls' day,  
And left my grave for an hour or so  
To call on those I used to know  
Before I passed away.

I visited my former Love  
As she lay by her husband's side ;  
I asked her if life pleased her, now  
She was rid of a poet wrung in brow,  
And crazed with the ills he eyed ;

Who used to drag her here and there  
Wherever his fancies led,  
And point out pale phantasmal things,  
And talk of vain vague purposings  
That she discredited.

She was quite civil, and replied,  
“Old comrade, is that you ?  
Well, on the whole, I like my life.—  
I know I swore I'd be no wife,  
But what was I to do ?

"You see, of all men for my sex  
 A poet is the worst ;  
 Women are practical, and they  
 Crave the wherewith to pay their way,  
 And slake their social thirst.

"You were a poet—quite the ideal  
 That we all love awhile :  
 But look at this man snoring here—  
 He's no romantic chancicleer,  
 Yet keeps me in good style.

"He makes no quest into my thoughts,  
 But a poet wants to know  
 What one has felt from earliest days,  
 Why one thought not in other ways,  
 And one's Loves of long ago."

Her words benumbed my fond frail ghost ;  
 The nightmares neighed from their stalls  
 The vampires screeched, the harpies flew,  
 And under the dim dawn I withdrew  
 To Death's inviolate halls.

## A WEEK

ON Monday night I closed my door,  
And thought you were not as heretofore,  
And little cared if we met no more.

I seemed on Tuesday night to trace  
Something beyond mere commonplace  
In your ideas, and heart, and face.

On Wednesday I did not opine  
Your life would ever be one with mine,  
Though if it were we should well combine.

On Thursday noon I liked you well,  
And fondly felt that we must dwell  
Not far apart, whatever befell.

On Friday it was with a thrill  
In gazing towards your distant vill  
I owned you were my dear one still.

I saw you wholly to my mind  
On Saturday—even one who shrined  
All that was best of womankind.

As wing-clipt sea-gull for the sea  
On Sunday night I longed for thee,  
Without whom life were waste to me !

## HAD YOU WEPT

HAD you wept ; had you but neared me with  
a frail uncertain ray,  
Dewy as the face of the dawn, in your large  
and luminous eye,  
Then would have come back all the joys the  
tidings had slain that day,  
And a new beginning, a fresh fair heaven,  
have smoothed the things awry.  
But you were less feebly human, and no  
passionate need for clinging  
Possessed your soul to overthrow reserve when  
I came near ;  
Ay, though you suffer as much as I from  
storms the hours are bringing  
Upon your heart and mine, I never see you  
shed a tear.

The deep strong woman is weakest, the weak  
one is the strong ;  
The weapon of all weapons best for winning,  
you have not used ;

Have you never been able, or would you not,  
through the evil times and long?

Has not the gift been given you, or such  
gift have you refused?

When I bade me not absolve you on that  
evening or the morrow,

Why did you not make war on me with those  
who weep like rain?

You felt too much, so gained no balm for all  
your torrid sorrow,

And hence our deep division, and our dark  
undying pain.

## BEREFT, SHE THINKS SHE DREAMS

I DREAM that the dearest I ever knew  
Has died and been entombed.  
I am sure it's a dream that cannot be true,  
But I am so overgloomed  
By its persistence, that I would gladly  
Have quick death take me,  
Rather than longer think thus sadly ;  
So wake me, wake me !

It has lasted days, but minute and hour  
I expect to get aroused  
And find him as usual in the bower  
Where we so happily housed.  
Yet stays this nightmare too appalling,  
And like a web shakes me,  
And piteously I keep on calling,  
And no one wakes me !

## IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

“WHAT do you see in that time-touched  
stone,  
When nothing is there  
But ashen blankness, although you give it  
A rigid stare?

“You look not quite as if you saw,  
But as if you heard,  
Parting your lips, and treading softly  
As mouse or bird.

“It is only the base of a pillar, they’ll tell you,  
That came to us  
From a far old hill men used to name  
Areopagus.”

—“I know no art, and I only view  
A stone from a wall,  
But I am thinking that stone has echoed  
The voice of Paul,

“ Paul as he stood and preached beside it  
Facing the crowd,  
A small gaunt figure with wasted features,  
Calling out loud

“ Words that in all their intimate accents  
Pattered upon  
That marble front, and were far reflected,  
And then were gone.

“ I’m a labouring man, and know but little,  
Or nothing at all ;  
But I can’t help thinking that stone once  
echoed  
The voice of Paul.”

## IN THE SERVANTS' QUARTERS

“MAN, you too, aren't you, one of these rough  
followers of the criminal ?

All hanging hereabout to gather how he's  
going to bear

Examination in the hall.” She flung disdainful  
glances on

The shabby figure standing at the fire with  
others there,

Who warmed them by its flare.

“No indeed, my skipping maiden : I know  
nothing of the trial here,

Or criminal, if so he be.—I chanced to come  
this way,

And the fire shone out into the dawn, and  
morning airs are cold now ;

I, too, was drawn in part by charms I see  
before me play,

That I see not every day.”

## IN THE SERVANTS' QUARTERS 173

‘Ha, ha!’ then laughed the constables who  
also stood to warm themselves,  
The while another maiden scrutinized his  
features hard,  
As the blaze threw into contrast every line  
and knot that wrinkled them,  
Exclaiming, “Why, last night when he was  
brought in by the guard,  
You were with him in the yard!”

“Nay, nay, you teasing wench, I say! You  
know you speak mistakenly.  
Cannot a tired pedestrian who has footed it  
afar  
Here on his way from northern parts, en-  
grossed in humble marketings,  
Come in and rest awhile, although judicial  
doings are  
Afoot by morning star?”

“O, come, come!” laughed the constables.  
“Why, man, you speak the dialect  
He uses in his answers; you can hear him up  
the stairs.  
So own it. We sha’n’t hurt ye. There he’s  
speaking now! His syllables  
Are those you sound yourself when you are  
talking unawares,  
As this pretty girl declares.”

## 174 IN THE SERVANTS' QUARTERS

“ And you shudder when his chain clinks ! ”  
    she rejoined. “ O yes, I noticed it.  
And you winced, too, when those cuffs they  
    gave him echoed to us here.  
They’ll soon be coming down, and you may  
    then have to defend yourself  
Unless you hold your tongue, or go away  
    and keep you clear  
When he’s led to judgment near ! ”

“ No ! I’ll be damned in hell if I know any-  
    thing about the man !  
No single thing about him more than every-  
    body knows !  
Must not I even warm my hands but I am  
    charged with blasphemies ? ” . . .  
—His face convulses as the morning cock  
    that moment crows,  
And he stops, and turns, and goes.

## THE OBLITERATE TOMB

“MORE than half my life long  
Did they weigh me falsely, to my bitter wrong,  
But they all have shrunk away into the silence  
Like a lost song.

“And the day has dawned and come  
For forgiveness, when the past may hold it  
dumb  
On the once reverberate words of hatred  
uttered  
Half in delirium. . . .

“With folded lips and hands  
They lie and wait what next the Will commands,  
And doubtless think, if think they can : ‘ Let  
discord  
Sink with Life’s sands ! ’

“By these late years their names,  
Their virtues, their hereditary claims,  
May be as near defacement at their grave-  
place  
As are their fames.”

176 THE OBLITERATE TOMB

—Such thoughts bechanced to seize  
A traveller's mind—a man of memories—  
As he set foot within the western city  
Where had died these

Who in their lifetime deemed  
Him their chief enemy—one whose brain had  
schemed  
To get their dingy greatness deeplier dingied  
And disesteemed.

So, sojourning in their town,  
He mused on them and on their once renown,  
And said, "I'll seek their resting-place to-  
morrow  
Ere I lie down,

"And end, lest I forget,  
Those ires of many years that I regret,  
Renew their names, that men may see some  
liegeness  
Is left them yet."

Duly next day he went  
And sought the church he had known them  
to frequent,  
And wandered in the precincts, set on eyeing  
Where they lay pent,

Till by remembrance led  
He stood at length beside their slighted bed,  
Above which, truly, scarce a line or letter  
Could now be read.

“ Thus years obliterate  
Their graven worth, their chronicle, their  
date !  
At once I'll garnish and revive the record  
Of their past state,

“ That still the sage may say  
In pensive progress here where they decay,  
' This stone records a luminous line whose  
talents  
Told in their day. ' ”

While speaking thus he turned,  
For a form shadowed where they lay inurned,  
And he beheld a stranger in foreign vesture,  
And tropic-burned.

“ Sir, I am right pleased to view  
That ancestors of mine should interest you,  
For I have come of purpose here to trace  
them. . . .  
They are time-worn, true,

“ But that's a fault, at most,  
Sculptors can cure. On the Pacific coast  
I have vowed for long that relics of my  
forbears  
I'd trace ere lost,

178 THE OBLITERATE TOMB

“And hitherward I come,  
Before this same old Time shall strike me  
numb,  
To carry it out.”—“Strange, this is !” said  
the other ;  
“What mind shall plumb

“Coincident design !  
Though these my father’s enemies were and  
mine,  
I nourished a like purpose—to restore them  
Each letter and line.”

“Such magnanimity  
Is now not needed, sir ; for you will see  
That since I am here, a thing like this is, plainly,  
Best done by me.”

The other bowed, and left,  
Crestfallen in sentiment, as one bereft  
Of some fair object he had been moved to  
cherish,  
By hands more deft.

And as he slept that night  
The phantoms of the ensepulchred stood up-  
right  
Before him, trembling that he had set him  
seeking|  
Their charnel-site.

## THE OBLITERATE TOMB 179

And, as unknowing his ruth,  
Asked as with terrors founded not on truth  
Why he should want them. "Ha," they  
    hollowly hacked,  
    "You come, forsooth,

    "By stealth to obliterate  
Our graven worth, our chronicle, our date,  
That our descendant may not gild the record  
    Of our past state,

    " And that no sage may say  
In pensive progress near where we decay :  
' This stone records a luminous line whose  
    talents  
    Told in their day.' "

Upon the morrow he went  
And to that town and churchyard never bent  
His ageing footsteps till, some twelvemonths  
    onward,  
    An accident

Once more detained him there ;  
And, stirred by hauntings, he must needs  
    repair  
To where the tomb was. Lo, it stood still  
    wasting  
In no man's care.

180 THE OBLITERATE TOMB

“The travelled man you met  
The last time,” said the sexton, “has not yet  
Appeared again, though wealth he had in  
    plenty.  
—Can he forget?”

“The architect was hired  
And came here on smart summons as desired,  
But never the descendant came to tell him  
    What he required.”

And so the tomb remained  
Untouched, untended, crumbling, weather-  
    stained,  
And though the one-time foe was fain to  
    right it  
He still refrained.

“I’ll set about it when  
I am sure he’ll come no more. Best wait till  
    then.”  
But so it was that never the stranger entered  
    That city again.

And the well-meaner died  
While waiting tremulously unsatisfied  
That no return of the family’s foreign scion  
    Would still betide.

## THE OBLITERATE TOMB 181

And many years slid by,  
And active church-restorers cast their eye  
Upon the ancient garth and hoary building  
The tomb stood nigh.

And when they had scraped each wall,  
Pulled out the stately pews, and smartened all,  
"It will be well," declared the spruce church-  
warden,  
"To overhaul

"And broaden this path where shown ;  
Nothing prevents it but an old tombstone  
Pertaining to a family forgotten,  
Of deeds unknown.

"Their names can scarce be read,  
Depend on't, all who care for them are dead."  
So went the tomb, whose shards were as path-  
paving  
Distributed.

Over it and about  
Men's footsteps beat, and wind and water-  
spout,  
Until the names, aforetime gnawed by  
weathers,  
Were quite worn out.

182 THE OBLITERATE TOMB

So that no sage can say  
In pensive progress near where they decay,  
“This stone records a luminous line whose  
talents  
Told in their day.”

## “REGRET NOT ME”

REGRET not me ;  
Beneath the sunny tree  
I lie uncaring, slumbering peacefully.

Swift as the light  
I flew my faery flight ;  
Ecstatically I moved, and feared no night.

I did not know  
That heydays fade and go,  
But deemed that what was would be always so.

I skipped at morn  
Between the yellowing corn,  
Thinking it good and glorious to be born.

I ran at eves  
Among the piled-up sheaves,  
Dreaming, “I grieve not, therefore nothing  
grieves.”

Now soon will come  
The apple, pear, and plum  
And hinds will sing, and autumn insects hum.

Again you will fare  
To cider-makings rare,  
And junketings ; but I shall not be there.

Yet gaily sing  
Until the pewter ring  
Those songs we sang when we went gipsying.

And lightly dance  
Some triple-timed romance  
In coupled figures, and forget mischance ;

And mourn not me  
Beneath the yellowing tree ;  
For I shall mind not, slumbering peacefully.

## THE RECALCITRANTS

LET us off and search, and find a place  
Where yours and mine can be natural lives,  
Where no one comes who dissects and dives  
And proclaims that ours is a curious case,  
That its touch of romance can scarcely grace.

You would think it strange at first, but then  
Everything has been strange in its time.  
When some one said on a day of the prime  
He would bow to no brazen god again  
He doubtless dazed the mass of men.

None will recognize us as a pair whose claims  
To righteous judgment we care not making;  
Who have doubted if breath be worth the  
    taking,  
And have no respect for the current fames  
Whence the savour has flown while abide the  
    names.

We have found us already shunned, disdained,  
And for re-acceptance have not once striven;  
Whatever offence our course has given  
The brunt thereof we have long sustained.  
Well, let us away, scorned, unexplained.

## STARLINGS ON THE ROOF

“ No smoke spreads out of this chimney-pot,  
The people who lived here have left the spot,  
And others are coming who knew them not.

“ If you listen anon, with an ear intent,  
The voices, you'll find, will be different  
From the well-known ones of those who  
went.”

“ Why did they go ? Their tones so bland  
Were quite familiar to our band ;  
The comers we shall not understand.”

“ They look for a new life, rich and strange ;  
They do not know that, let them range  
Wherever they may, they will get no change.

“ They will drag their house-gear ever so far  
In their search for a home no miseries mar ;  
They will find that as they were they are,

“ That every hearth has a ghost, alack,  
And can be but the scene of a bivouac  
Till they move perforce—no time to pack ! ”

## THE MOON LOOKS IN

### I

I have risen again,  
And awhile survey  
By my chilly ray  
Through your window-pane  
Your upturned face,  
As you think, " Ah—she  
Now dreams of me  
In her distant place ! "

### II

I pierce her blind  
In her far-off home :  
She fixes a comb,  
And says in her mind,  
" I start in an hour ;  
Whom shall I meet ?  
Won't the men be sweet,  
And the women sour ! "

## THE SWEET HUSSY

IN his early days he was quite surprised  
When she told him she was compromised  
By meetings and lingerings at his whim,  
And thinking not of herself but him ;  
While she lifted orbs aggrieved and round  
That scandal should so soon abound,  
(As she had raised them to nine or ten  
Of antecedent nice young men) :  
And in remorse he thought with a sigh,  
How good she is, and how bad am I !—  
It was years before he understood  
That she was the wicked one—he the good.

## THE TELEGRAM

“ O HE’S suffering—maybe dying—and I not  
there to aid,  
And smooth his bed and whisper to him !  
Can I nohow go ?  
Only the nurse’s brief twelve words thus  
hurriedly conveyed,  
As by stealth, to let me know.

“ He was the best and brightest !—candour  
shone upon his brow,  
And I shall never meet again a soldier such  
as he,  
And I loved him ere I knew it, and perhaps  
he’s sinking now,  
Far, far removed from me ! ”

—The yachts ride mute at anchor and the  
fulling moon is fair,  
And the giddy folk are strutting up and  
down the smooth parade,  
And in her wild distraction she seems not to  
be aware  
That she lives no more a maid,

But has vowed and wived herself to one who  
blessed the ground she trod  
To and from his scene of ministry, and  
thought her history known  
In its last particular to him—aye, almost as  
to God,  
And believed her quite his own.

So great her absentmindedness she droops as  
in a swoon,  
And a movement of aversion mars her recent  
spousal grace,  
And in silence we two sit here in our waning  
honeymoon  
At this idle watering-place. . . .

What now I see before me is a long lane  
overhung  
With lovelessness, and stretching from the  
present to the grave.  
And I would I were away from this, with  
friends I knew when young,  
Ere a woman held me slave.

## THE MOTH-SIGNAL

*(On Egdon Heath)*

“WHAT are you still, still thinking,”  
He asked in vague surmise,  
“That you stare at the wick unblinking  
With those great lost luminous eyes?”

“O, I see a poor moth burning  
In the candle-flame,” said she,  
“Its wings and legs are turning  
To a cinder rapidly.”

“Moths fly in from the heather,”  
He said, “now the days decline.”  
“I know,” said she. “The weather,  
I hope, will at last be fine.

“I think,” she added lightly,  
“I’ll look out at the door.  
The ring the moon wears nightly  
May be visible now no more.”

She rose, and, little heeding,  
Her husband then went on  
With his attentive reading  
In the annals of ages gone.

Outside the house a figure  
Came from the tumulus near,  
And speedily waxed bigger,  
And clasped and called her Dear.

“I saw the pale-winged token  
You sent through the crack,” sighed she.  
“That moth is burnt and broken  
With which you lured out me.

“And were I as the moth is  
It might be better far  
For one whose marriage troth is  
Shattered as potsherds are !”

Then grinned the Ancient Briton  
From the tumulus treed with pine :  
“So, hearts are thwartly smitten  
In these days as in mine !”

## SEEN BY THE WAITS

THROUGH snowy woods and shady  
    We went to play a tune  
To the lonely manor-lady  
    By the light of the Christmas moon.

We violed till, upward glancing  
    To where a mirror leaned,  
We saw her airily dancing,  
    Deeming her movements screened ;

Dancing alone in the room there,  
    Thin-draped in her robe of night ;  
Her postures, glassed in the gloom there,  
    Were a strange phantasmal sight.

She had learnt (we heard when homing)  
    That her roving spouse was dead ;  
Why she had danced in the gloaming  
    We thought, but never said.

## THE TWO SOLDIERS

Just at the corner of the wall  
We met—yes, he and I—  
Who had not faced in camp or hall  
Since we bade home good-bye,  
And what once happened came back—all—  
Out of those years gone by.

And that strange woman whom we knew  
And loved—long dead and gone,  
Whose poor half-perished residue,  
Tombless and trod, lay yon !  
But at this moment to our view  
Rose like a phantom wan.

And in his fixed face I could see,  
Lit by a lurid shine,  
The drama re-enact which she  
Had dyed incarnadine  
For us, and more. And doubtless he  
Beheld it too in mine.

A start, as at one slightly known,  
And with an indifferent air  
We passed, without a sign being shown  
That, as it real were,  
A memory-acted scene had thrown  
Its tragic shadow there.

## THE DEATH OF REGRET

I OPENED my shutter at sunrise,  
And looked at the hill hard by,  
And I heartily grieved for the comrade  
Who wandered up there to die.

I let in the morn on the morrow,  
And failed not to think of him then,  
As he trod up that rise in the twilight,  
And never came down again.

I undid the shutter a week thence,  
But not until after I'd turned  
Did I call back his last departure  
By the upland there discerned.

Uncovering the casement long later,  
I bent to my toil till the gray,  
When I said to myself, "Ah—what ails me,  
To forget him all the day!"

As daily I flung back the shutter  
In the same blank bald routine,  
He scarcely once rose to remembrance  
Through a month of my facing the scene.

196 THE DEATH OF REGRET

And ah, seldom now do I ponder  
At the window as heretofore  
On the long valued one who died yonder,  
And wastes by the sycamore.

## IN THE DAYS OF CRINOLINE

A PLAIN tilt-bonnet on her head  
She took the path across the leaze.  
—Her spouse the vicar, gardening, said,  
“Too dowdy that, for coquetries,  
    So I can hoe at ease.”

But when she had passed into the heath,  
And gained the wood beyond the flat,  
She raised her skirts, and from beneath  
Unpinned and drew as from a sheath  
    An ostrich-feathered hat.

And where the hat had hung she now  
Concealed and pinned the dowdy hood,  
And set the hat upon her brow,  
And thus emerging from the wood  
    Tripped on in jaunty mood.

The sun was low and crimson-faced  
As two came that way from the town,  
And plunged into the wood untraced. . .  
When separately therefrom they paced  
    The sun had quite gone down.

## 198 IN THE DAYS OF CRINOLINE

The hat and feather disappeared,  
The dowdy hood again was donned,  
And in the gloom the fair one neared  
Her home and husband dour, who conned  
    Calmly his blue-eyed blonde.

“To-day,” he said, “you have shown good  
    sense,  
A dress so modest and so meek  
Should always deck your goings hence  
Alone.” And as a recompense  
    He kissed her on the cheek.

## THE ROMAN GRAVEMOUNDS

By Rome's dim relics there walks a man,  
Eyes bent ; and he carries a basket and spade ;  
I guess what impels him to scrape and scan ;  
Yea, his dreams of that Empire long decayed.

“Vast was Rome,” he must muse, “in the  
world's regard,  
Vast it looms there still, vast it ever will be ;”  
And he stoops as to dig and unmine some  
shard  
Left by those who are held in such memory.

But no ; in his basket, see, he has brought  
A little white furred thing, stiff of limb,  
Whose life never won from the world a  
thought ;  
It is this, and not Rome, that is moving him.

And to make it a grave he has come to the  
spot,  
And he delves in the ancient dead's long  
home ;

## 200 THE ROMAN GRAVEMOUNDS

Their fames, their achievements, the man  
    knows not ;  
The furred thing is all to him—nothing  
    Rome !

“ Here say you that Cæsar’s warriors lie ?—  
But my little white cat was my only friend !  
Could she but live, might the record die  
Of Cæsar, his legions, his aims, his end ! ”

Well, Rome’s long rule here is oft and again  
A theme for the sages of history,  
And the small furred life was worth no one’s  
    pen ;  
Yet its mourner’s mood has a charm for me.

*November 1910.*

## THE WORKBOX

“SEE, here’s the workbox, little wife,  
That I made of polished oak.”  
He was a joiner, of village life ;  
She came of borough folk.

He holds the present up to her  
As with a smile she nears  
And answers to the profferer,  
“ ’Twill last all my sewing years ! ”

“ I warrant it will. And longer too.  
’Tis a scantling that I got  
Off poor John Wayward’s coffin, who  
Died of they knew not what.

“ The shingled pattern that seems to cease  
Against your box’s rim  
Continues right on in the piece  
That’s underground with him.

“And while I worked it made me think  
Of timber’s varied doom ;  
One inch where people eat and drink,  
The next inch in a tomb.

“But why do you look so white, my dear,  
And turn aside your face ?  
You knew not that good lad, I fear,  
Though he came from your native  
place ? ”

“How could I know that good young man,  
Though he came from my native town,  
When he must have left there earlier than  
I was a woman grown ? ”

“Ah, no. I should have understood !  
It shocked you that I gave  
To you one end of a piece of wood  
Whose other is in a grave ? ”

“Don’t, dear, despise my intellect,  
Mere accidental things  
Of that sort never have effect  
On my imaginings.”

Yet still her lips were limp and wan,  
Her face still held aside,  
As if she had known not only John,  
But known of what he died.

THE SACRILEGE  
A BALLAD-TRAGEDY

(*Circa* 182—)

PART I

“I HAVE a Love I love too well  
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor ;  
I have a Love I love too well,  
    To whom, ere she was mine,  
‘Such is my love for you,’ I said,  
‘That you shall have to hood your head  
A silken kerchief crimson-red,  
    Wove finest of the fine.’

“And since this Love, for one mad moon,  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor,  
Since this my Love for one mad moon  
    Did clasp me as her king,  
I snatched a silk-piece red and rare  
From off a stall at Priddy Fair,  
For handkerchief to hood her hair  
    When we went gallanting.

“ Full soon the four weeks neared their end  
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor ;  
And when the four weeks neared their end,  
    And their swift sweets outwore,  
I said, ‘ What shall I do to own  
Those beauties bright as tulips blown,  
And keep you here with me alone  
    As mine for evermore? ’

“ And as she drowsed within my van  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor—  
And as she drowsed within my van,  
    And dawning turned to day,  
She heavily raised her sloe-black eyes  
And murmured back in softest wise,  
‘ One more thing, and the charms you prize  
    Are yours henceforth for aye.

“ ‘ And swear I will I’ll never go  
While Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor  
To meet the Cornish Wrestler Joe  
    For dance and dallyings.  
If you’ll to yon cathedral shrine,  
And finger from the chest divine  
Treasure to buy me ear-drops fine,  
    And richly jewelled rings.’

“ I said : ‘ I am one who has gathered gear  
From Marlbury Downs to Dunkery Tor,  
Who has gathered gear for many a year  
    From mansion, mart and fair ;

But at God's house I've stayed my hand,  
Hearing within me some command—  
Curbed by a law not of the land  
    From doing damage there.'

"Whereat she pouts, this Love of mine,  
As Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor,  
And still she pouts, this Love of mine,  
    So cityward I go.  
But ere I start to do the thing,  
And speed my soul's imperilling  
For one who is my ravishing  
    And all the joy I know,

"I come to lay this charge on thee—  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor—  
I come to lay this charge on thee  
    With solemn speech and sign :  
Should things go ill, and my life pay  
For botchery in this rash assay,  
You are to take hers likewise—yea,  
    The month the law takes mine.

"For should my rival, Wrestler Joe,  
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor—  
My reckless rival, Wrestler Joe,  
    My Love's possessor be,  
My tortured spirit would not rest,  
But wander weary and distressed  
Throughout the world in wild protest :  
    The thought nigh maddens me !"

## PART II

Thus did he speak—this brother of mine—  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor,  
Born at my birth of mother of mine,  
    And forthwith went his way  
To dare the deed some coming night . . .  
I kept the watch with shaking sight,  
The moon at moments breaking bright,  
    At others glooming gray.

For three full days I heard no sound  
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor,  
I heard no sound at all around  
    Whether his fay prevailed,  
Or one malign the master were,  
Till some afoot did tidings bear  
How that, for all his practised care,  
    He had been caught and jailed.

They had heard a crash when twelve had  
    chimed  
By Mendip east of Dunkery Tor,  
When twelve had chimed and moonlight  
    climbed ;  
    They watched, and he was tracked  
By arch and aisle and saint and knight  
Of sculptured stonework sheeted white  
In the cathedral's ghostly light,  
    And captured in the act.

Yes ; for this Love he loved too well  
Where Dunkery sights the Severn shore,  
All for this Love he loved too well  
    He burst the holy bars,  
Seized golden vessels from the chest  
To buy her ornaments of the best,  
At her ill-witchery's request  
    And lure of eyes like stars. . . .

When blustering March confused the sky  
In Toneborough Town by Exon Moor,  
When blustering March confused the sky  
    They stretched him ; and he died.  
Down in the crowd where I, to see  
The end of him, stood silently,  
With a set face he lipped to me—  
    "Remember." "Ay !" I cried.

By night and day I shadowed her  
From Toneborough Deane to Dunkery Tor,  
I shadowed her asleep, astir,  
    And yet I could not bear—  
Till Wrestler Joe anon began  
To figure as her chosen man,  
And took her to his shining van—  
    To doom a form so fair !

He made it handsome for her sake—  
And Dunkery smiled to Exon Moor—  
He made it handsome for her sake,  
    Painting it out and in ;

And on the door of apple-green  
A bright brass knocker soon was seen,  
And window-curtains white and clean  
For her to sit within.

And all could see she clave to him  
As cleaves a cloud to Dunkery Tor,  
Yea, all could see she clave to him,  
And every day I said,  
“A pity it seems to part those two  
That hourly grow to love more true :  
Yet she’s the wanton woman who  
Sent one to swing till dead ! ”

That blew to blazing all my hate,  
While Dunkery frowned on Exon Moor,  
And when the river swelled, her fate  
Came to her pitilessly. . . .  
I dogged her, crying : “Across that plank  
They use as bridge to reach yon bank  
A coat and hat lie limp and dank ;  
Your goodman’s, can they be ? ”

She paled, and went, I close behind—  
And Exon frowned to Dunkery Tor,  
She went, and I came up behind  
And tipped the plank that bore  
Her, fleetly flitting across to eye  
What such might bode. She slid awry ;  
And from the current came a cry,  
A gurgle ; and no more.

How that befell no mortal knew  
From Marlbury Downs to Exon Moor ;  
No mortal knew that deed undue  
    But he who schemed the crime,  
Which night still covers. . . . But in dream  
Those ropes of hair upon the stream  
He sees, and he will hear that scream  
    Until his judgment-time.

## THE ABBEY MASON

*(Inventor of the "Perpendicular" Style of  
Gothic Architecture)*

THE new-vamped Abbey shaped apace  
In the fourteenth century of grace ;

(The church which, at an after date,  
Acquired cathedral rank and state.)

Panel and circumscribing wall  
Of latest feature, trim and tall,

Rose roundabout the Norman core  
In prouder pose than theretofore,

Encasing magically the old  
With parpend ashlar manifold.

The trowels rang out, and tracery  
Appeared where blanks had used to be.

Men toiled for pleasure more than pay,  
And all went smoothly day by day,

Till, in due course, the transept part  
Engrossed the master-mason's art.

—Home-coming thence he tossed and turned  
Throughout the night till the new sun burned.

“What fearful visions have inspired  
These gaingivings?” his wife inquired;

“As if your tools were in your hand  
You have hammered, fitted, muttered, planned;

“You have thumped as you were working  
hard :  
I might have found me bruised and scarred.

“What then's amiss. What eating care  
Looms nigh, whereof I am unaware?”

He answered not, but churchward went,  
Viewing his draughts with discontent;

And fumbled there the livelong day  
Till, hollow-eyed, he came away.

—'Twas said, “The master-mason's ill!”  
And all the abbey works stood still.

Quoth Abbot Wygmore : “ Why, O why  
Distress yourself? You’ll surely die ! ”

The mason answered, trouble-torn,  
“ This long-vogued style is quite outworn !

“ The upper archmould nohow serves  
To meet the lower tracery curves :

“ The ogees bend too far away  
To give the flexures interplay.

“ This it is causes my distress. . . .  
So it will ever be unless

“ New forms be found to supersede  
The circle when occasions need.

“ To carry it out I have tried and toiled,  
And now perforce must own me foiled !

“ Jeerers will say : ‘ Here was a man  
Who could not end what he began ! ’ ”

—So passed that day, the next, the next ;  
The abbot scanned the task, perplexed ;

The townsmen mustered all their wit  
To fathom how to compass it,

But no raw artistries availed  
Where practice in the craft had failed. . . .

—One night he tossed, all open-eyed,  
And early left his helpmeet's side.

Scattering the rushes of the floor  
He wandered from the chamber door

And sought the sizing pile, whereon  
Struck dimly a cadaverous dawn

Through freezing rain, that drenched the  
board  
Of diagram-lines he last had scored—

Chalked phantasies in vain begot  
To knife the architectural knot—

In front of which he dully stood,  
Regarding them in hopeless mood.

He closelier looked ; then looked again :  
The chalk-scratched draught-board faced the  
rain,

Whose icicled drops derormed the lines  
Innumeros of his lame designs,

So that they streamed in small white threads  
From the upper segments to the heads

Of arcs below, uniting them  
Each by a stalactitic stem.

—At once, with eyes that struck out sparks,  
He adds accessory cusping-marks,

Then laughs aloud. The thing was done  
So long assayed from sun to sun. . . .

—Now in his joy he grew aware  
Of one behind him standing there,

And, turning, saw the abbot, who  
The weather's whim was watching too.

Onward to Prime the abbot went,  
Tacit upon the incident.

—Men now discerned as days revolved  
The ogive riddle had been solved ;

Templates were cut, fresh lines were chalked  
Where lines had been defaced and balked,

And the work swelled and mounted higher,  
Achievement distancing desire ;

Here jambs with transoms fixed between,  
Where never the like before had been—

There little mullions thinly sawn  
Where meeting circles once were drawn.

“We knew,” men said, “the thing would go  
After his craft-wit got aglow,

“And, once fulfilled what he has designed,  
We’ll honour him and his great mind !”

When matters stood thus poised awhile,  
And all surroundings shed a smile,

The master-mason on an eve  
Homed to his wife and seemed to grieve. . .

—“The abbot spoke to me to-day :  
He hangs about the works alway.

“He knows the source as well as I  
Of the new style men magnify.

“He said : ‘You pride’ yourself too much  
On your creation. Is it such ?

“‘Surely the hand of God it is  
That conjured so, and only His !—

“‘Disclosing by the frost and rain  
Forms your invention chased in vain ;

“ ‘Hence the devices deemed so great  
You copied, and did not create.’

“I feel the abbot’s words are just,  
And that all thanks renounce I must.

“Can a man welcome praise and pelf  
For hatching art that hatched itself? . . .

“So, I shall own the deft design  
Is Heaven’s outshaping, and not mine.”

“What !” said she. “Praise your works  
ensure  
To throw away, and quite obscure

“Your beaming and beneficent star?  
Better you leave things as they are !

“Why, think awhile. Had not your zest  
In your loved craft curtailed your rest—

“Had you not gone there ere the day  
The sun had melted all away !”

—But, though his good wife argued so,  
The mason let the people know

That not unaided sprang the thought  
Whereby the glorious fane was wrought,

But that by frost when dawn was dim  
The method was disclosed to him.

“Yet,” said the townspeople thereat,  
“’Tis your own doing, even with that!”

But he—chafed, childlike, in extremes—  
The temperament of men of dreams—

Aloofly scrupled to admit  
That he did aught but borrow it,

And diffidently made request  
That with the abbot all should rest.

—As none could doubt the abbot’s word,  
Or question what the church averred,

The mason was at length believed  
Of no more count than he conceived,

And soon began to lose the fame  
That late had gathered round his name. . . .

—Time passed, and like a living thing  
The pile went on embodying,

And workmen died, and young ones grew,  
And the old mason sank from view

And Abbots Wygmore and Staunton went  
And Horton sped the embellishment.

But not till years had far progressed  
Chanced it that, one day, much impressed,

Standing within the well-graced aisle,  
He asked who first conceived the style ;

And some decrepit sage detailed  
How, when invention nought availed,

The cloud-cast waters in their whim  
Came down, and gave the hint to him

Who struck each arc, and made each mould  
And how the abbot would not hold

As sole begetter him who applied  
Forms the Almighty sent as guide ;

And how the master lost renown,  
And wore in death no artist's crown.

—Then Horton, who in inner thought  
Had more perceptions than he taught,

Replied : “ Nay ; art can but transmute ;  
Invention is not absolute ;

“ Things fail to spring from nought at call,  
And art-beginnings most of all.

“ He did but what all artists do,  
Wait upon Nature for his cue.”

—“ Had you been here to tell them so  
Lord Abbot, sixty years ago,

“ The mason, now long underground,  
Doubtless a different fate had found.

“ He passed into oblivion dim,  
And none knew what became of him !

“ His name ? ’Twas of some common kind  
And now has faded out of mind.”

The Abbot : “ It shall not be hid !  
I’ll trace it.” . . . But he never did.

—When longer yet dank death had wormed  
The brain wherein the style had germed

From Gloucester church it flew afar—  
The style called Perpendicular.—

To Winton and to Westminster  
It ranged, and grew still beautifuller :

From Solway Frith to Dover Strand  
Its fascinations starred the land,

Not only on cathedral walls  
But upon courts and castle halls,

Till every edifice in the isle  
Was patterned to no other style,

And till, long having played its part,  
The curtain fell on Gothic art.

—Well : when in Wessex on your rounds,  
Take a brief step beyond its bounds,

And enter Gloucester : seek the quoin  
Where choir and transept interjoin,

And, gazing at the forms there flung  
Against the sky by one unsung—

The ogee arches transom-topped,  
The tracery-stalks by spandrels stopped,

Petrified lacework—lightly lined  
On ancient massiveness behind—

Muse that some minds so modest be  
As to renounce fame's fairest fee,

(Like him who crystallized on this spot  
His visionings, but lies forgot,

And many a mediaeval one  
Whose symmetries salute the sun)

While others boom a baseless claim,  
And upon nothing rear a name.

## THE JUBILEE OF A MAGAZINE

*(To the Editor)*

YES ; your up-dated modern page—  
All flower-fresh, as it appears—  
Can claim a time-tried lineage,

That reaches backward fifty years  
(Which, if but short for sleepy squires,  
Is much in magazines' careers).

—Here, on your cover, never tires  
The sower, reaper, thresher, while  
As through the seasons of our sires

Each wills to work in ancient style  
With seedlip, sickle, share and flail,  
Though modes have since moved many a  
mile !

The steel-roped plough now rips the vale,  
With cog and tooth the sheaves are won,  
Wired wheels drum out the wheat like hail ;

## THE JUBILEE OF A MAGAZINE 223

But if we ask, what has been done  
To unify the mortal lot  
Since your bright leaves first saw the sun,

Beyond mechanic furtherance—what  
Advance can rightness, candour, claim?  
Truth bends abashed, and answers not.

Despite your volumes' gentle aim  
To straighten visions wry and wrong,  
Events jar onward much the same!

—Had custom tended to prolong,  
As on your golden page engrained,  
Old processes of blade and prong,

And best invention been retained  
For high crusades to lessen tears  
Throughout the race, the world had  
gained! . . .  
But too much, this, for fifty years.

## THE SATIN SHOES

“If ever I walk to church to wed,  
As other maidens use,  
And face the gathered eyes,” she said,  
“I’ll go in satin shoes !”

She was as fair as early day  
Shining on meads unmown,  
And her sweet syllables seemed to play  
Like flute-notes softly blown.

The time arrived when it was meet  
That she should be a bride ;  
The satin shoes were on her feet,  
Her father was at her side.

They stood within the dairy door,  
And gazed across the green ;  
The church loomed on the distant moor,  
But rain was thick between.

“The grass-path hardly can be stepped,  
The lane is like a pool!”—  
Her dream is shown to be inept,  
Her wish they overrule.

“To go forth shod in satin soft  
A coach would be required!”—  
For thickest boots the shoes were doffed—  
Those shoes her soul desired. . . .

All day the bride, as overborne,  
Was seen to brood apart,  
And that the shoes had not been worn  
Sat heavy on her heart.

From her wrecked dream, as months flew on,  
Her thought seemed not to range.  
What ails the wife?” they said anon,  
“That she should be so strange?” . . .

Ah—what coach comes with furtive glide—  
A coach of closed-up kind?  
It comes to fetch the last year’s bride,  
Who wanders in her mind.

She strove with them, and fearfully ran  
Stairward with one low scream:  
“Nay—coax her,” said the madhouse man,  
“With some old household theme.”

“ If you will go, dear, you must fain  
Put on those shoes—the pair  
Meant for your marriage, which the rain  
Forbade you then to wear.”

She clapped her hands, flushed joyous hues ;  
“ O yes—I’ll up and ride  
If I am to wear my satin shoes  
And be a proper bride ! ”

Out then her little foot held she,  
As to depart with speed ;  
The madhouse man smiled pleasantly  
To see the wile succeed.

She turned to him when all was done,  
And gave him her thin hand,  
Exclaiming like an enraptured one,  
“ This time it will be grand ! ”

She mounted with a face elate,  
Shut was the carriage door ;  
They drove her to the madhouse gate,  
And she was seen no more. . . .

Yet she was fair as early day  
Shining on meads unmown,  
And her sweet syllables seemed to play  
Like flute-notes softly blown.

## EXEUNT OMNES

### I

EVERYBODY else, then, going,  
And I still left where the fair was? . . .  
Much have I seen of neighbour loungers  
Making a lusty showing,  
Each now past all knowing.

### II

There is an air of blankness  
In the street and the littered spaces ;  
Thoroughfare, steeple, bridge and highway  
Wizen themselves to lankness ;  
Kennels dribble dankness.

### III

Folk all fade. And 'whither,  
As I wait alone where the fair was?  
Into the clammy and numbing night-fog  
Whence they entered hither.  
Soon do I follow thither !

*June 2, 1913.*

## A POET

ATTENTIVE eyes, fantastic heed,  
Assessing minds, he does not need,  
Nor urgent writs to sup or dine,  
Nor pledges in the roseate wine.

For loud acclaim he does not care  
By the august or rich or fair,  
Nor for smart pilgrims from afar,  
Curious on where his hauntings are.

But soon or later, when you hear  
That he has doffed this wrinkled gear,  
Some evening, at the first star-ray,  
Come to his graveside, pause and say :

“ Whatever the message his to tell,  
Two bright-souled women loved him well.”  
Stand and say that amid the dim :  
It will be praise enough for him.

*July 1914.*

## POSTSCRIPT

### “MEN WHO MARCH AWAY”

(SONG OF THE SOLDIERS)

WHAT of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
To hazards whence no tears can win us ;  
What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away ?

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye,  
Who watch us stepping by  
With doubt and dolorous sigh ?  
Can much pondering so hoodwink you !  
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye ?

230 "MEN WHO MARCH AWAY"

Nay. We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see—  
Dalliers as they be—  
England's need are we ;  
Her distress would leave us rueing :  
Nay. We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see !

In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just,  
And that braggarts must  
Surely bite the dust,  
Press we to the field ungrieving,  
In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
To hazards whence no tears can win us ;  
Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away.

*September 5, 1914.*

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